

Wide gap on Hebron

TALKS on the delayed Israeli redeployment from Hebron resumed in Jerusalem yesterday under US auspices, and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat said the gaps between the two sides remained "very wide".

Arafat, speaking at a news conference in Ramallah, contradicted assessments made just hours earlier by a senior Palestinian negotiator that agreement was within reach.

The negotiations are focusing on ways of improving security guarantees for some 400 Jewish settlers living amid the 120,000 Arab residents of Hebron, the last West Bank town still under full Israeli occupation.

Israeli newspapers reported that in an overnight session that lasted until early yesterday, the two sides agreed on the transfer of civilian powers in Hebron. Israel made some concessions, for example dropping demands to retain sole control over granting building permits to the Jewish settlers, the reports said.

Some differences remained concerning security arrangements after a troop pullback. One difficulty was Israel's demand to retain control over a larger area of Hebron than originally agreed upon, the reports said.

The Palestinians showed optimism. "New ideas have been put forward and things are beginning to become clearer," said Palestinian Information Minister Yasser Abd-Rabbou.

But Arafat played down reports of progress. "I am sorry to say that until this morning the gaps were very wide... We are looking for an honest and accurate implementation of the peace agreement."

The Associated Press quoted an Israeli official as saying Arafat was holding up agreement to pressure Israel. "It's just a matter of a decision by Arafat to close out an agreement," said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity. "It's pretty clear that they are not yet ready to sign."

The latest rounds have been mediated by American peace envoy Dennis Ross who decided on Tuesday to delay his return to Washington to pursue signs of progress. And the level of the negotiations was raised, with the teams including Israeli military chief, Lt. Gen. Amnon Shashak and Mahmoud Abbas, Yasser Arafat's deputy.

Netanyahu told reporters on Tuesday that "the negotiation is very close to completion" and said a meeting between him and Arafat would be "desirable" when an accord is reached.

Abd-Rabbou, asked if the summit could be held soon, said: "The summit might take place any day next week. But I cannot assure that... The main thing is to close the gap and the summit will come."

As the negotiators met in a Jerusalem hotel, there was growing concern that extremists from either side would carry out an attack to scuttle the talks. The AP said.

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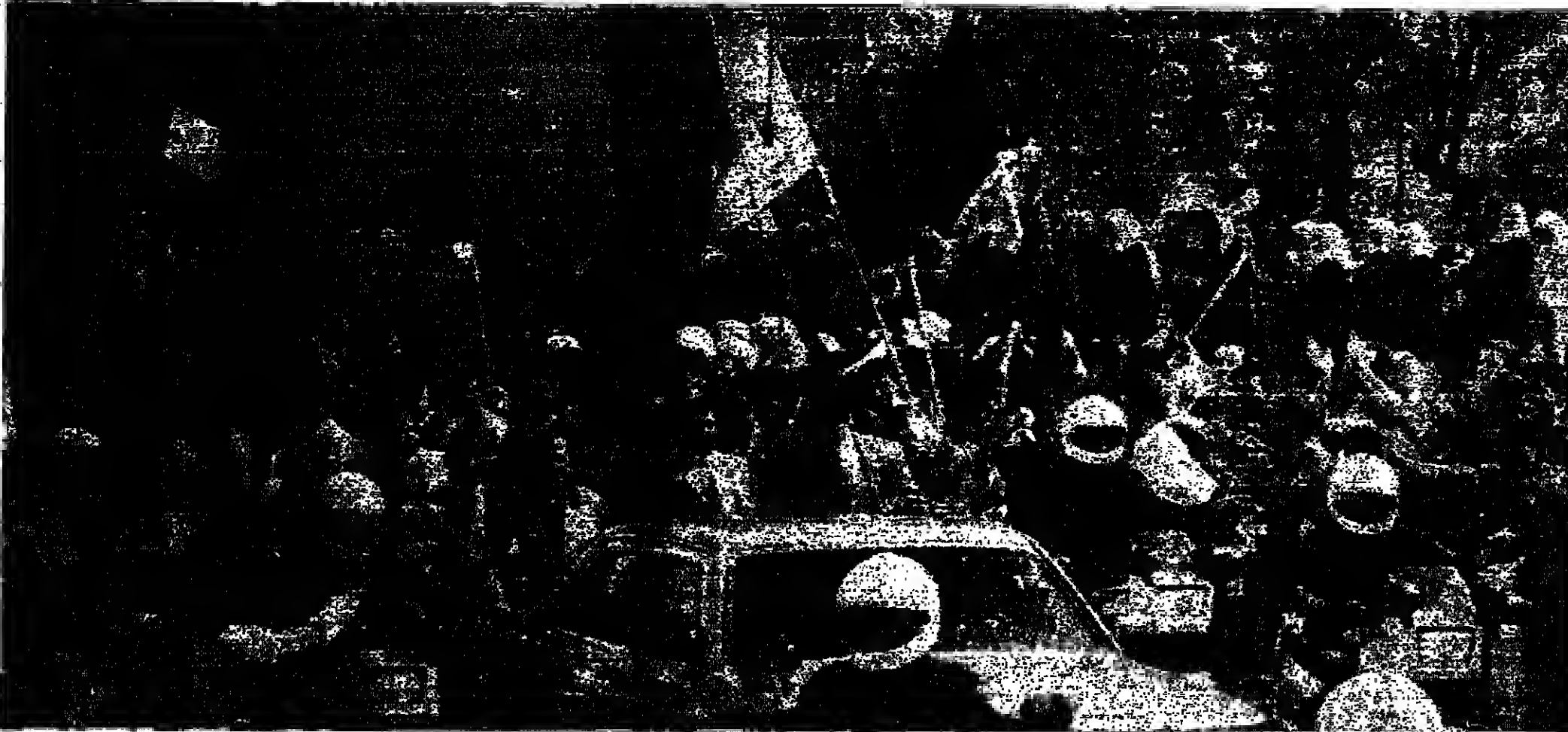
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Hundreds of Palestinians chanting "Vive Chirac, vive la France" welcome the French president as he arrives in Ramallah, yesterday (photo: AP)

Chirac's dream, Likud's nightmare

French President Jacques Chirac, who arrives in Cairo tomorrow, was given a hero's welcome by the Palestinians in Ramallah yesterday

French President Jacques Chirac visited the Palestinian territories yesterday, offering his support, but urging the Palestinians to respect democratic principles and Israel's "legitimate" right to security as they seek to build an independent state.

After a two-day visit to Israel, the French leader flew by helicopter to the West Bank town of Ramallah, where he was given an enthusiastic welcome by Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, and thousands of schoolchildren cheering "Vive Chirac, vive la France".

Giving the first speech by a foreign leader to the Palestinians' elected legislative council, Chirac backed Palestinian positions in tough negotiations with Israel's right-wing government and reaffirmed support for an independent Palestinian state.

But, according to the French news agency AFP, he also implicitly criticised the current functioning of the Palestinian National Authority, in which Arafat wields virtually total power and which still does not have a written constitution more than two years after its establishment.

"I hope that you will find the rules which will ensure a balance of power between the executive and legislative branches," Chirac told the 88-member assembly elected in January.

"The respect of democratic principles is one of the assets which will guarantee you broad international support and strengthen the confidence of your partners," he said, referring to the Israelis.

At the same time, Chirac cautioned the Palestinians against letting frustration with setbacks in the peace process explode into violence, urging them to "reject ex-

tremsism, and push back the forces of hate."

To achieve peace, Chirac continued, Israel's "legitimate desire for security must be understood and acknowledged by all. Israel, once assured of the peaceful intentions of its Arab neighbours, will become convinced that the existence of a Palestinian state does not represent a threat, but, on the contrary, is an element of its own security."

In his visit to Israel on Monday and Tuesday, Chirac had publicly supported Palestinian demands for Israel to rapidly resume implementation of the 1995 Oslo interim agreement on Palestinian self-rule, and he reiterated this position in Ramallah.

"To advance, signed agreements must first be respected, in both letter and spirit... This interim status must not be abusively extended," he said — a clear reference to the deadlock which has stymied the peace process since Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu came to power.

Chirac demanded that Netanyahu's policy of expanding Jewish settlement in the Palestinian territories "must be halted now." He also called for the immediate lifting of Israel's military closure of the Palestinian territories, an end to Israel's demolition of Palestinian homes and to Israel's "changes of the status quo in Jerusalem."

"There cannot be a peace that excludes the city of peace, Jerusalem," he said. "The solution for Jerusalem cannot be solely religious, nor solely national. It is necessary that freedom of access for the faithful, all the faithful, be guaranteed everywhere. And any idea of sov-

ereignty, from whatever quarter, must be fitted into the framework of the negotiated compromise planned under the Oslo Agreements. This compromise solution will have to take into account the rights and aspirations of all the parties concerned."

The peace process, Chirac said, "has somehow run out of breath, and there is a certain deterioration in confidence between the sides. France and the European Union can build confidence."

"We will continue to mobilise the [European] Union to ensure that its political role is commensurate with its economic commitment, so that it becomes a co-sponsor of the peace process."

Chirac was repeatedly interrupted by applause and standing ovations, notably when he spoke against Israel's annexation of East Jerusalem.

Arafat thanked Chirac for his support and said the Palestinians needed his help in dealing with the hardline Israeli government. "You come at a sensitive time when the peace process in its entirety is facing serious obstacles. We are doing our best to reduce these obstacles."

He assured the French president that "The choice of democracy based on pluralism and human rights... is the basis of our young entity."

Chirac and Arafat later flew to the Gaza Strip, where they were scheduled to visit the site of a harbour to be built with French help, and to inaugurate a street named Charles de Gaulle in the city centre.

From Ramallah, Graham Usher writes that the orchestrated pomp in the town was entirely in keeping with the Palestinians' diplomatic aims for the visit, and con-

trasted sharply with what had happened to Chirac the day before in Jerusalem's old city. Fressed and jostled by Israeli security guards as he attempted to speak to local Palestinians, at one point Chirac threatened to leave Israel altogether. "Is that what you want?" he yelled. "For me to go back to my plane and return to France?"

Following the fracas, the French submitted a formal complaint to the Israeli Foreign Ministry, and, at a press conference, Netanyahu publicly apologised for the behaviour of his security men. Chirac said he considered the matter closed.

What is not closed, however, is the significance. As far as the Likud government is concerned, Chirac's three-day visit to Israel and the Occupied Territories has been a public relations nightmare, at a time when Israel needs all the "relations" it can get. Having spent some 14 hours in talks with President Hafez Al-Assad in Damascus, Chirac visited the Knesset for just five minutes, during which he was accused of anti-Semitism by Rehavam Ze'evi, leader of the far right Moldelet Party. The French leader had declined an invitation to address Israel's parliament.

But it is not only Chirac's protocol that has angered the Likud government. More tellingly, it is the message he has brought with him. Speaking to students in Haifa on Monday, Chirac called on the Israelis to allow Palestinians to "exercise their right to self-determination" through the establishment of a Palestinian state. He also insisted that the time had come for Europe to become a co-sponsor of the peace process.

Neither message is likely to go down well with Israel and the Americans.

Trouble in the heart of Israel

Netanyahu's policies have spawned dissension among Israelis and confrontations with the Palestinians. Graham Usher in Jerusalem reviews Israel's troubled home front

One consequence of the confrontations that erupted in late September between Israeli and Palestinian military forces has been the re-opening of schisms in Israeli society that, one year ago this Saturday, claimed the life of Yitzhak Rabin.

The immediate aftermath of the clashes saw a resuscitated Peace Now (PN) movement pull thousands of Israelis onto the streets of Jerusalem and Tel Aviv to protest (in the words of PN Secretary-General Moshe Raz) "Netanyahu's destruction of the peace process". But the Israeli left were not alone in their activism.

On Netanyahu's "triumphant" return from the Washington crisis summit on 3 October — where the Israeli leader refused any gesture to the Palestinians in the teeth of both US and Arab demands — Likud supporters plastered the walls of Jerusalem urging the prime minister to "be strong and of good courage". On the outer fringes of Israeli politics, Jewish settlers from Hebron have also given notice that they will set up vigilante "defence forces" should the Israeli army redeploy in the city.

These divisions are disturbing enough for an Israeli public which has dealt with the trauma caused by Rabin's assassination largely by suppressing it. But a greater fear is the growing perception that the current polarisation goes beyond the ideologies of left and right and into the very heart of the Israeli state.

Last week, the head of Israel's prestigious Jaffee Centre for Strategic Studies, Ze'ev Maoz, said that a military coup against Netanyahu's premiership could not be ruled out given the present levels of "mistrust" between Israel's political and military echelons. While Maoz himself admits that such a scenario is "remote", most Israeli commentators are aware there is a crisis of faith between Netanyahu and his military chiefs.

Immediately after Netanyahu's election win, the heads of the Israeli army (IDF) and Shin Bet intelligence service (GSS) ad-

vised the new Israeli leader not to do anything to upset the security cooperation established between their forces and the Palestinian Authority's (PA) various security arms. Netanyahu simply ignored them. His move to open the tunnel beside the Al-Aqsa Mosque in occupied East Jerusalem not only sparked the worst violence the Occupied Territories have ever seen; as predicted, it has led to the complete breakdown of any coordination between Israel and the PA. Every major military figure in Israeli society, including Netanyahu's own defence minister, Yitzhak Mordechai, has since distanced himself from that decision, claiming either that they were not consulted or that their counsel over "timing" was not heeded.

The "distancing" of Netanyahu appears also to be the current line of the Clinton administration. Having failed to extract concessions from Netanyahu in Washington, an angry Warren Christopher dispatched his special Middle East envoy Dennis Ross to Israel to play an "active role" in the ongoing Palestinian-Israeli negotiations on Hebron. But, according to Israeli journalist Nahm Barnea (writing in the Israeli daily *Yedioth Aharnot* on 11 October), Ross has not only been "facilitating" the talks; he has been urging Mordechai (against Netanyahu) to soften Israel's security demands in Hebron. In Washington, Christopher has also prevailed on Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy, to assume a "higher profile" in the

peace process lest the negotiations on Hebron "explode".

Such dissension is music to the opposition's ears. On 13 October, Shimon Peres warned Netanyahu that the Israeli people would not stand by and "let the deterioration which has taken place in the state continue". Peres' Labour Party has already lent its support to a coalition of Jewish and Arab opposition parties whose sole policy, activated after the confrontations, is to denounce Netanyahu and promote the peace process. Meretz member of parliament Dedi Zuckerman has gone a step further, calling on Israelis to engage in "civic acts of protests".

For the beleaguered Likud government, such cries, in the current climate, are nothing short of "incitement" — an especially serious charge in post-Rabin Israel. It is a charge the opposition has thrown right back, igniting the worst relations between Israel's two main parties since the assassination. "Even at the height of our pain, we will not call Netanyahu a traitor or murderer, nor dress him up in a Nazi uniform," says Meretz leader Yossi Sarid. "In our garden, there will not sprout a Yigal Amir." Yigal Amir is the Jewish religious student who shot dead Rabin.

The acrimony is expected to endure. With Netanyahu's standing in opinion polls running at around 50 per cent in favour of his handling of the current crisis and 50 per cent against, the opposition bloc has called for a mass rally on 26 October in Tel Aviv to commemorate Rabin's assassination. The mood in Israel may not yet be as incendiary as it is in the Occupied Territories; but it is getting close.

At his "victory" address in Jerusalem on 2 June, Netanyahu pledged not only a "stable peace" with all of Israel's neighbours, but also, "and most important, peace within Israel, the peace between us". Five months into his tenure, Netanyahu has failed on both counts. Outside Israel's borders and within them, peace has never been so fragile.

Stranded refugee evacuated

AN AMBULANCE was dispatched late Tuesday night to a border camp, housing about 200 Palestinians expelled by Libya, to remove to hospital a pregnant and bleeding woman, the Middle East News Agency said.

The "humanitarian" decision was taken by Defence Minister Field Marshal Mohamed Hussein Tantawi after the representative of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees issued an appeal for the evacuation of Ferial Ali Mahmoud, pregnant in her eighth month, either to Egypt or Libya.

The agency said the ambulance was to take the woman to a government hospital in Salloun, on the Egyptian side of the border with Libya. If her condition requires surgery, the woman will be moved to a government or army hospital in the coastal city of Marsa Matruh, where better medical facilities are available. (see p.2)

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Excluding punishment by analogy

Awad El-Morr,
chief justice of the
Supreme Constitutional
Court, examines
legislation affecting the
heads of political parties and
the editors-in-chief of party newspapers



Case No 25 for the 10th judicial year concerned the constitutional validity or otherwise of paragraph two of Article 15, dealing with the law on political parties promulgated by Law No 40 (1977), amended by Law No 36 (1984) which provides that "the head of the party shall be responsible, along with the editor-in-chief of the party's newspaper, in respect of what is published therein."

Article 195 of the criminal law outlines the extent to which the editor-in-chief shall be responsible by stating that:

"Without prejudice to the responsibility of the author of the writing, the designer of the drawing or the producer of any other representative material, the editor-in-chief or — if there is none — the editor accountable for the section in which was published the material in question shall be punished as the principal offender of crimes committed by the newspaper."

"However, he shall be released of his criminal responsibility: (1) If he proves that publication had taken place without his knowledge and produced on the commencement of investigation the information and documents he has which would help in the determination of the person responsible for what has been published. (2) If during investigation, he disclosed the name of the offender, produced all the information and documents he has proving his responsibility and established in addition that he would have suffered substantial damage or lost his post in the newspaper had he not published the respective material."

The petitioner — in his capacity as the head of the Labour Party — was indicted upon allegations that defamatory statements had been addressed against a former minister of petroleum and mineral resources and published in *Al-Shaab* newspaper. In the course of deciding the criminal charges by the trial court, the invalidity of paragraph two of Article 15 of the law on political parties was raised. The trial court, after considering from a *prima facie* point of view the plausibility of the constitutional issue, prescribed the time limit within which the petitioner brought his case before the Supreme Constitutional Court, claiming that the challenged provision contravenes the principle of personalised criminal responsibility and punishment; the presumption of innocence; the freedom of expression including that of the press; and equal protection before the law.

In striking down the challenged provision, the court first asserted that responsibility thereunder is of a penal and not a civil nature and therefore ought to be strictly construed and applied, taking into account that criminal statutes are inherently and drastically oppressive imposing either — directly or indirectly — the most stringent restrictions on personal freedom, and consequently have to avoid vagueness and rigorously observe the rational limits of criminal responsibility.

Under the challenged provision, the court pointed out, whoever heads a party is considered responsible in his capacity as a natural person and not as a legal representative either in his relationships with others or before courts. In addition, the challenged provision based his responsibility not on considerations attributable to specified acts he committed, but on attachment with the position of the editor-in-chief, making both the same. Therefore, neither of each is to be viewed separately but in accompaniment, the court affirmed. Indeed, under the challenged provision the responsibility of the editor-in-chief is the attendant condition of that of the head of the party. Considering the responsibility of the latter to be that of the former emphasises their existence in association with the same features and characteristics, to the extent that the former, as outlined by Article 195 of the penal code, has become the derivative source of that of the petitioner, the court explained.

In principle, crimes reflect the inarticulated premise of criminal responsibility based on the assumption that everyone has a free will and is thereby capable of controlling his or her behaviour. Therefore, only conduct violating societal-oriented values protected by its coercive sanctions shall be subject to the mandates of penal law. "Who is to be understood, the court clarified, that in most crimes an evil-doing hand and an evil-meaning mind run together, being concurrently combined and inextricably interrelated. In all civilised countries the free will of the offender demonstrates a choice being made between evil which should be avoided and rightful conduct which should be maintained. These selective choices are expressive of the relationship between prescribed penal sanctions on the one hand and the need to ascertain the existence of a mental element determining, on the other hand, the degree of deviance or dangerousness of the offender."

Hence, and in principle, an act or omission may not be incriminated unless voluntarily contemplated, whether intent is general or specific, felonious or fraudulent, embraces malice aforethought or simply reflects guilty knowledge, thus indicating in all these cases a willful desire to become involved in what is viewed by criminal law as inherently wrong.

Despite the punitive nature of the challenged provision, there is no indication that the prescribed punishment was associated in whatever form with specific conduct materially attributed to the petitioner in contravention of the legal premise that criminal statutes should in no way be formulated to trap others. Nor in the absence of the material element of a crime may an alleged offender be punished. The principle of the personalisation of punishment means that penalties proportionate to crimes are ascribed to and the property of their responsible offenders. In addition, the court continued, the determination of the material element in press crimes significantly bears on freedom of expression, the breathing space of which should not be interfered with or unduly subject to restrictions which would inhibit or frustrate its mission, being a vehicle of information and opinion.

Concomitant with the presumption of innocence, is the enforcement of procedural rules having direct impact on the right to counsel, including the right of the accused to have witnesses in his favour and to be confronted with the witnesses against him. In the light of the challenged provision, publication crimes primarily pertain to the editor-in-chief and subordinate to the petitioner in his capacity as the head of the party in whose journal the respective publication took place. Viewing both under that provision as principal offenders with respect to the crimes in question, both must then necessarily have the same weapons for their defence.

However, in violation of the principle of equal protection before the law and the right of defence, the petitioner was entirely deprived of all weapons to negate his responsibility which shall stand in all events whenever that of the editor-in-chief was established. In other words, and from an analytical approach, the petitioner has become — in so far as his responsibility is concerned — dependent on that of the editor being subservient to the extent that whenever the responsibility of the latter is proven, that of the petitioner shall arise, the Court noted.

As has been previously indicated, the responsibility of the editor-in-chief suffices in itself, where established, to condemn the head of the political party, since the latter comes into existence only subsequent to the emergence of the former. Treating the former as the parentage and the latter as derivative therefrom, is hoping more than punishment by analogy laid down in the absence of individualised patterns of incriminated conduct, the Court affirmed.

In addition, the criminal responsibility envisaged under the challenged provision could not be perceived except on the assumption that the head of the party effected with vigilance his control over the newspaper, and that due to his presumed negligence, the writings complained of were published; an assumption repugnant to justice and inconsistent with the natural course of things upon a two-fold consideration: (1) Presupposing the petitioner reviewing every word to be published and examining under his own values the scope of punishment, will inevitably end in the abolition of the responsibility of the editor-in-chief, who would then have no authority over the journal and therefore could not be treated as offender of the crime of libel. (2) In addition, if the claimed assumption was not erroneous, the petitioner's responsibility for slander would be separately articulated and not formulated compendiously, as is the case under the challenged provision.

Given the fact that the challenged provision has been tailored in violation of the equal protection clause, the respect due to personal liberty, the right to counsel, the personalisation of responsibility, the foundations of a fair trial, the presumption of innocence, and the principle of the separation of powers, it contradicts articles 40, 41, 66, 67, 79 and 165 of the Constitution.



FRENCH Foreign Minister Hervé de Charette arrived in Egypt last Monday and met with President Hosni Mubarak. The minister reiterated a French proposal for Europe to co-sponsor the peace process, saying that "Middle East peace is a vital goal for Europe and France."

He added that France was eager to help resolve the impasse in the current peace talks despite Israel's objections.

"Everybody should work for peace," he said. "All efforts should be coordinated in this matter. Europe and France have their responsibility in this field, and achieving peace is a vital issue for France's interests in the region."

De Charette made it clear that France and the European Union are not seeking to supplant the United States in the peace process, saying France "acknowledges, approves and supports the big American role in the region."

The French minister rejoined French President Jacques Chirac yesterday in the West Bank city of Ramallah.

Chirac, who is due to arrive tomorrow in Cairo, decided that de Charette would not accompany him on the Israeli leg of their Middle East tour to protest against Israel's opposition to the foreign minister's original plan to visit Orient House, the Palestine Liberation Organisation's unofficial headquarters in East Jerusalem. (photo: Mohamed Hassan)

Rulings amass on '95 poll

Parliament is unlikely to heed rulings by the Court of Cassation invalidating the results of the 1995 elections in 96 constituencies. With even more rulings expected, both government and opposition MPs stand to lose their seats, reports Gamal Essam El-Din

Opposition parties persistently cried foul during and after the parliamentary elections of November-December 1995, charging that the vote had been rigged in favour of the ruling National Democratic Party. Their claims have received a boost during the past few months from a prestigious quarter — rulings by the Court of Cassation invalidating the election results in 96 out of the nation's 222 constituencies. The court cited various irregularities — such as the use of ballot cards bearing the names of dead people — as the reason for its decisions.

Additional rulings by the Supreme Administrative Court on the results in 98 constituencies are expected in the coming weeks and the opposition hopes that further annulments could lead to the dissolution of the People's Assembly. But parliamentary sources believe this is highly unlikely, underlining the fact that the house has failed to endorse what it considers merely as court recommendations, rather than orders. MPs whose membership was declared invalid by the court include cabinet ministers and prominent NDP officials.

According to the constitution, the Court of Cassation is responsible for investigating appeals filed against election results, while the Supreme Administrative Court investigates appeals filed against voting procedures before the announcement of the results by the Interior Ministry.

Article 93 of the constitution states that the decisions of the Court of Cassation should be submitted to the People's Assembly. In order to become final, a decision must be endorsed by a two-thirds majority in the house.

Following the 1995 elections, the Court of Cassation received an unprecedented 915 ap-

peals, compared to 200 appeals following the 1987 elections and 260 appeals following the 1990 elections.

According to the court's chairman, Ahmed Medhat El-Maraghi, the court has so far acted on 218 appeals out of the 915 it received, rejecting 122 of them and invalidating the membership of 96 deputies, mostly NDP members.

Kamal Khaled, a lawyer who managed to have the People's Assembly dissolved in 1984 and again in 1987, by order of the Supreme Constitutional Court, attributed the record number of appeals to several causes. "First, the strong performance of the previous parliament and its success in addressing controversial national issues and directing questions to government ministers was a major factor in persuading opposition parties to end their boycott of elections and parliament," said Khaled, who was an independent member of the outgoing Assembly.

Khaled said that the opposition parties' boycott of the 1990 elections had a negative effect on the performance of the 1990-1995 parliament. Nevertheless, a group of 31 independents managed to make up for the absence of the opposition parties, giving a serious performance that won the praise of the opposition parties as well as the media, he said.

With the end of the opposition election boycott in the 1995 elections, Khaled continued, the number of opposition candidates swelled to a record 780 out of a total of 4,014 candidates. The fact that only 14 opposition party candidates managed to win seats, together with charges by human rights groups that the elections were rigged, led the unsuccessful candidates to file appeals with the Court of Cassa-

tion and the Supreme Administrative Court.

Another reason for the large number of appeals, Khaled said, is the fact that the 1995 elections were contested by a large number of millionaire businessmen. In this era of free enterprise in which business seeks political power, around 37 businessmen managed to win seats. "The rest, frustrated by their inability to buy seats in parliament, filed appeals against the results," said Khaled.

Moreover, he claimed that the government's reluctance to conduct the elections under full judicial control and to ensure proper voting procedures — such as the removal of the names of dead people and emigrants from voting lists — opened the door to wide-scale rigging, resulting in any appeals.

NDP deputies whose membership was declared invalid by the Court of Cassation include: Mohamed Moussa, chairman of the Assembly's Legislative Committee, told *Al-Ahram Weekly* that the Assembly and the Court of Cassation use different criteria in assessing whether the election in a certain constituency was rigged. According to Moussa, a minor irregularity, such as polling officers failing to sign the final report on the voting process, would be enough for the court to declare that constituency's result invalid, whereas the Assembly would not view such a mistake as sufficient reason to annul a result, he said.

By the end of last July, the Assembly's legislative committee had examined court rulings on the results of 47 out of 50 constituencies, rejecting them all.

The membership of at least four opposition MPs was also declared invalid. They are: the Wafd's Ahmed Abu Ismail, in Samamoud, Gharbiya; the Wafd's Fouad Badrawi, in Nabrouh, Daqahliya; Tagammu's Mohamed Shaaban, in Hadyek Al-Qobba, Cairo; and Tagammu's Mohamed El-Dohari, in Al-Manzala, Daqahliya.

Mohamed Moussa, chairman of the Assembly's Legislative Committee, told *Al-Ahram Weekly* that the Assembly and the Court of Cassation use different criteria in assessing whether the election in a certain constituency was rigged. According to Moussa, a minor irregularity, such as polling officers failing to sign the final report on the voting process, would be enough for the court to declare that constituency's result invalid, whereas the Assembly would not view such a mistake as sufficient reason to annul a result, he said.

"But if mistakes are proved to be grave enough to have had a negative effect on the whole voting process, then we [the legislative committee] will not hesitate to approve the court's decision," Moussa said. He affirmed that he would not chair the committee's meeting that would discuss the appeal filed by Ahmed El-Hefni, a former chairman of the Supreme Constitutional Court and former MP, contesting the result of elections in his native constituency of Minyet Al-Nasr. The court ruled that the elections in that constituency, which Moussa won, were rigged.

By the end of last July, the Assembly's legislative committee had examined court rulings on the results of 47 out of 50 constituencies, rejecting them all.

In search of Imhotep's tomb

Excavations at Saqqara may soon uncover the long-sought Tomb of Imhotep, antiquity's architectural and medical genius. Sherine Nasr reports on the findings

A Polish archaeological mission has been exploring to the west of Zoser's step pyramid in Saqqara in search of what the archaeologists believe may turn out to be a discovery of considerable importance.

Professor Karol Mysliwiec, who heads the mission, believes he has found evidence that the Tomb of Imhotep, venerated by the ancients as the god of medicine, may soon be unearthed.

Mysliwiec said archaeologists had previously shown little interest in the area west of Saqqara, and that most excavations had taken place to the east — where there are Old and Middle Kingdom tombs — and to the north — where tombs from the Second Dynasty were found by a British mission. But now archaeologists may have to revise their long-held views.

"I was convinced that the west was important because that is where burial grounds are generally found," he explained.

Acting on this theory, the mission began to examine the whole site in 1987, using geophysical techniques and some excavations. "We found a wall running parallel to the enclosure wall of Zoser's Pyramid and dating back to the same period," said Mysliwiec.

At the time, there was no indication of the purpose of the wall. It was only this year, when the mission decided to extend the excavation 10 metres to the east and south that their work began to bear fruit.

The archaeologists discovered that the wall surrounded an open-air courtyard which is part of a Second or early Third Dynasty structure yet to be fully excavated. "All indications show that

the tomb belongs to a king or an equally prestigious person, if not Imhotep himself, the architectural genius who first used stone for large-scale construction and who designed Zoser's pyramid," Mysliwiec said.

The open air courtyard displays clear traces of ritual fires. "There is a line of four red-coloured circles with black areas inside them. This is one reason why I think the tomb belongs to an exceptionally important person," he said.

Imhotep is among the most famous pharaohs of ancient Egyptian history. He was Zoser's vizier and the builder of his funerary complex. He was also well known for his wisdom and, 3000 years after his death, was venerated as the god of medicine. There are statues of Imhotep in museums around the world, but his tomb has never been found.

If Mysliwiec's theory proves correct,

it will be a remarkable discovery. The late British scholar Walter Emery spent years searching for the tomb on the Saqqara plateau. Finding galleries of mummified animals, Emery was convinced that he was on the right track, but eventually had to give up his search.

Mysliwiec said that a number of factors had combined to make him believe that he has found the long-lost tomb of Imhotep. "First, it is very close to the Zoser Pyramid. Workers at the site have also found small faience tiles and vessels similar to those used to decorate the subterranean chamber of Zoser's complex. The tomb undoubtedly belongs to an important person who could afford equally precious decoration," he said. As Zoser's highest-ranking official, Imhotep seems the obvious candidate.

"There are also two rock-hewn shafts, four metres long and three metres wide, which are covered with an extremely complicated ceiling structure of many layers," he said. Unfortunately, the walls are uninscribed.

The area west of the shafts has been fully excavated, but proved to be filled with rubble. "They were used as a camouflage to protect the actual entrance to the subterranean rooms," Mysliwiec said, adding that he hopes that, by excavating to the east of the shafts, he may discover the actual burial chamber where the sarcophagus of the deceased and his funerary equipment lies.

The mission intends to continue the excavations eastward in the direction of Zoser's pyramid, in order to proceed systematically through the different strata in its attempt to reach the tomb.

Death threatens refugees

Twenty-one Palestinians stranded along the Egyptian-Libyan border need to be evacuated immediately for health reasons or, warns the UNHCR, many of them may die. Khaled Dawoud reports

For the 200 Palestinians still stranded in a desert camp on the Egyptian-Libyan border following Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi's expulsion of all Palestinians last September, living conditions are getting steadily worse. Gaddafi decided to expel all 30,000 Palestinians working in Libya to protest the peace agreements between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation. The Palestinians still living in the camp say they have nowhere else to go, and now, as winter approaches, the situation has become particularly grave for 21 of those refugees, according to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Mohamed Boukry, regional representative of the UNHCR, told a news conference in Cairo on Tuesday that all negotiations with the concerned parties had failed to solve the problem of the stranded Palestinians. Prospects for resolution of the issue were further dimmed following the election of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in June, he said.

Egypt managed to persuade Gaddafi to delay further expulsions, although thousands of Palestinians have already left Libya. Egypt, which follows a strict policy on granting vi-

sas to the Palestinians, did not allow them across the border. Israel also turned them down, contending that the future of refugees is one of the issues to be discussed in the final status negotiations with the Palestinians.

"We would like to see them relocated to another site within Libya, far away from the harsh conditions of the border post," Boukry said, adding that the Libyan authorities did not oppose their return. There were, he said, 21 Palestinians who needed to be evacuated immediately. They include three pregnant women, nine people with heart conditions and six diabetics.

Ferial Ali Mahmoud Jaber, in her eighth month of pregnancy, "has had a difficult pregnancy and needs to be evacuated immediately if we want to save her life and the life of her baby," Boukry said.

A World Health Organisation doctor, who accompanied a UNHCR team on a visit to the Palestinians' camp on 16-18 October, confirmed that the lives of the pregnant women and the other sick refugees are in danger.

"These people could die at any moment," Boukry said. "We would like to appeal to all sides and request them to immediately evacuate those whose lives are in danger."

Teams from the UNHCR have paid 20 visits to the border area since the camp was set up in September 1995. They described it as "unfit for human settlement" due to harsh weather conditions, with temperatures rising to 50 degrees celsius in summer and plummeting to below zero in winter.

Several children have suffered scorpion stings and Boukry cited the additional danger of mines, left over from World War II.

He said the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA) has tried hard to deal with the issue. "But the problem is that there have been no contacts between UNRWA and the new government of Israel since it came to power."

According to UNHCR spokesman Panos Moontzis, "the dream of all those on the border is to return to Gaza, but this is not possible at the moment." Boukry, however, said he believes that many of them are willing to return to Libya, but added that there are reports that they are being pressured by a minority to refuse for political reasons.

The problem is primarily political, acknowledged Boukry. "But we have to find a temporary solution to end the sufferings of these people."

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Police clampdown on Shi'ite group

In separate security swoops, the police arrested suspected members of Al-Gama'a Al-Islamiya, and clamped down on a Shi'ite group with alleged Iranian connections. Jailan Halawi reports

The Interior Ministry announced on Monday that 56 Egyptian Shi'ites, accused of forming an underground group to propagate the ideology of the Iranian Revolution, had been arrested in five governorates. And in a separate statement, the ministry reported that 12 members and collaborators of the militant Al-Gama'a Al-Islamiya, including bank robbers who had escaped with LE400,000 in cash, had been rounded up in the southern governorates of Beni Suef and Al-Minya.

The ministry said its agents had infiltrated the Shi'ite organisation at the beginning of this year, keeping the activities of its leaders and members in the governorates of Cairo, Giza, Sharqia, Daqahliya and Gharbiya under close surveillance.

The organisation had set up underground Shi'ite centres in the five governorates and "extremist elements" had been recruited and instructed in the principles of Shi'ism. According to the ministry statement, they would eventually have been sent to Iran for "advanced training" with the objective of setting up a supreme council that would lead the Shi'ite movement in Egypt.

With funding from local and foreign sources amounting to LE100,000, the underground organisation also aimed at infiltrating "some political parties" and using them to propagate the Iranian ideology, the statement added. Leaders of the organisation, who were said to have visited Iran and established contact with leading Iranian and Arab Shi'ite figures, also planned to "flood the country" with literature and cassette tapes preaching the Shi'ite faith "with the objective of

dividing the Islamic nation." According to the statement, those arrested included Sheikh Hassan Mohamed Shehata, a graduate of an Al-Azhar secondary school who worked as a preacher at a mosque in Giza. He was said to have played a principal role in "implementing the Shi'ite scheme and propagating Iranian ideology."

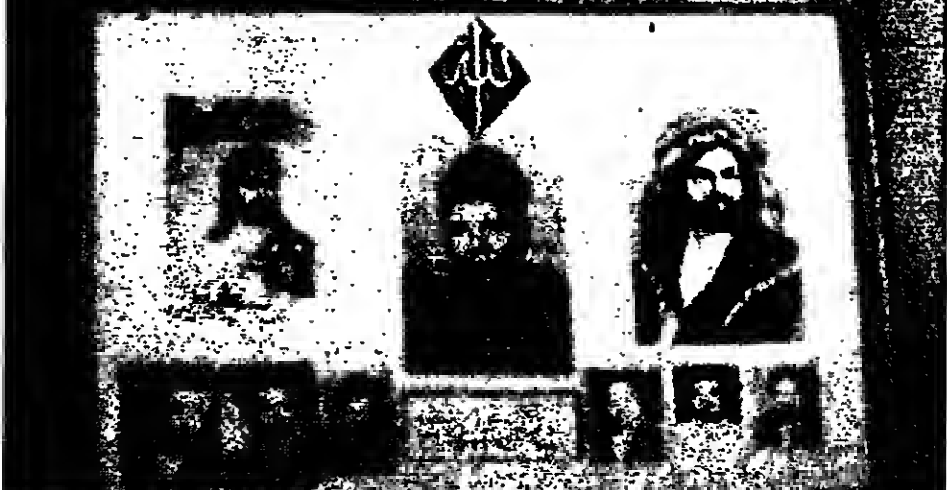
Other leaders of the group were named as: Hussein Ali El-Dehghani, a merchant; Sayed Ali El-Dehghani, a driver; Ahmed Rassem Amin, a doctor; Mohamed Abul-Ela, unemployed; Ibrahim Abul-Ela, a civil servant; Samir El-Kashef, a teacher; Mahmoud Raghab Bekhat, a merchant; and Salem Mustafa El-Sabbagh, a civil servant. They were all said to have visited Iran.

The statement said the police also seized a large amount of cash, together with computers, printers and Shi'ite literature and tapes.

In a separate statement, the ministry said that four Al-Gama'a Al-Islamiya militants, who had held up a bank in the town of Al-Ayyat in the Governorate of Giza in August and escaped with LE400,000 in cash, had been arrested in Giza and Beni Suef during the past few days.

The four were also said to have been responsible for killing two policemen in Suez City, firing shots at a police officers' club in Beni Suef and stealing a Toyota vehicle in the town of Maghagha in Al-Minya Governorate after killing its owner and his son.

In addition to the four militants, eight suspected collaborators and arms traffickers were apprehended.



The headquarters of the Shi'ite group, with banned portraits of Imam Ali, the Prophet's cousin

Mallawi: calm but still insecure

Residents of the village of Nazlat Al-Badraman near Mallawi are mourning their latest victim in the ongoing confrontation between security forces and Islamist militants. Nafie Adib Kyrollos, 30, was on his way to the fields in the early morning last week, when he was caught in an exchange of fire between police and militants. He was hit by a bullet in the forehead.

"He thought the shooting was far away, but it was very close and the bullet hit him straight in the head," said his weeping 50-year-old father, Kyrollos was in a coma for four days, before dying late on Sunday in an Assiut hospital.

The battle, which was described as fierce and ended in a major victory for the police, who killed four of the most wanted members of Al-Gama'a Al-Islamiya, thought to be responsible for a series of major attacks during the past two years.

People in Nazlat El-Badraman said they were happy that the terrorists had been killed, but for Kyrollos' parents, the militants' death was scant solace for the loss of their only son, who left three children and a pregnant wife. They have, they say, had no help from the authorities.

"Isn't my son a martyr? Why doesn't the government care about us, seeing that he was killed

While a measure of calm has been restored to Mallawi, where normal life had been disrupted by militant activity, outbreaks of violence continue to shake neighbouring villages. Khaled Dawoud revisits the southern Egyptian town

in the battle against terrorism?" asked the father. Local police sources have praised their latest operation in Nazlat Al-Badraman, saying it was the result of close cooperation with village residents who had tipped them off about the militants' hideout in local sugarcane fields.

Iman Ahmed, a lawyer and human rights activist in the nearby town of Deir Mawas, said the locals were becoming increasingly impatient with Al-Gama'a's acts of violence.

The latest attacks by the underground group, she said, reflect their increasing weakness, because they are only targeting low-ranking policemen and those accused of cooperating with the police. "We no longer see those big attacks against top policemen as was the case in the past."

But since Al-Gama'a launched a new wave of attacks during the past few weeks, residents of Nazlat Al-Badraman and other villages known

as militant hotbeds, such as Tanda, Manshiya, Al-Roda and Al-Idara, have been living under a self-imposed night-time curfew.

"People do not want to be caught in the cross-fire or harassed by police if they take the risk of going out at night," Ahmed said.

In Mallawi itself, residents agreed that the situation has improved since the official night-time curfew, imposed on the city for over a year, was lifted about six months ago.

Atel Abdel-Aziz El-Tobani, a teacher in Mallawi, told *Al-Ahram Weekly* that since the appointment of Mansour El-Essawi as the new governor of Al-Minya governorate, greater attention was being devoted to improving public services such as roads, hospitals and sewage. "As a result, people are warming up to the government and now merchants are reopening their shops in the hope of making up for the losses of the past two years," he said.

Essawi has won special praise for upgrading Mallawi's central hospital. Health minister Ismail Sallam visited the hospital twice in six months, providing new equipment and beds.

Except for a few roadblocks, checkpoints and brick towers, manned by heavily armed policemen, the security forces no longer maintain a heavy presence in Mallawi compared to the situation before the lifting of the curfew. The only exception is a street in central Mallawi where many of the city's jewellery shops are located. An armoured vehicle is positioned there and special forces are deployed.

However, taxi and minibus drivers in Mallawi continue to complain of their treatment by the police. Nagi Abdel-Samad, a taxi driver, said police often commandeer his vehicle and use it to patrol the city and nearby villages. The same goes for owners of tractors, whom the police also force to take part in the destruction of sugarcane fields where militants are believed to be hiding.

"We do not mind helping the police, but we also want to eat," said Abdel-Samad. Not only were they unpaid for their efforts, he added, but the police treated them in a humiliating manner.

Arab summit ruled out

PRESIDENT Hosni Mubarak has said that Europe is entitled to a greater role in the Middle East peace process and ruled out an Arab summit in the near future.

Mubarak, as he toured the industrial complex at Sadat City this week, said that Europe "must have a role in the peace process" in proportion to its influence in the region. He explained that 70 per cent of Israeli exports go to Europe and that the European Union is the largest donor to both Israel and the Palestinians.

Mubarak added that French President Jacques Chirac, who is mulling the region, is exerting great efforts to assist in resolving the Palestinian issue, even though Israel refuses European mediation.

Answering reporters' questions, Mubarak excluded the possibility that an Arab summit would be held in the near future. The remark quashed a prediction by Palestinian President Yasser Arafat that an Arab summit would take place within two months with Iraq attending. "For such a summit to take place, circumstances must permit it and there must be a strong reason for it," Mubarak said, adding that "differences between Israel and the Palestinians over implementing their agreements is not reason enough for holding a summit."

Mubarak also reiterated his belief that the third Middle East/North Africa Economic Conference (MENA III) will greatly help Egypt, but noted that attendance will not be at the highest executive level. He said Egypt is going ahead with plans for the conference, to be held in Cairo from 12-14 November, regardless of whether Israel makes progress in negotiations with the Palestinians. He said that Israel "will pay the price" for its hardline policies.

Eurospace in the Middle East

EUROPE will not continue to play bank in the Middle East peace process forever without carving out for itself a political role in the region, said Italy's Prime Minister Romano Prodi during a visit to Cairo this week, reports Nevine Khalil.

Talking to reporters after meeting with President Hosni Mubarak for over an hour on Monday, Prodi asked: "Do you think it is realistic that we shall go on paying for years and years and increasing our economic presence and just shut up?"

Prodi said he doubted that the European Union "would go on doing this job for an indefinite period."

Europe, spearheaded by France, has for a long time been trying to assert itself in the Arab-Israeli peacemaking, but has faced strong resistance from the United States and Israel. Prodi said that the EU does not want to antagonise the US or push for immediate results but wants to translate its "already strong economic presence into peace action."

French President Jacques Chirac, currently on tour in the region, demanded that Europe become a co-sponsor of the peace process along with the US and Russia. Egypt, Syria and the Palestinian Authority have encouraged the European initiative but Prodi said that, during their talks, Mubarak was pessimistic that it would achieve quick results.

The EU, the largest single aid donor to the Palestinian Authority, finds it unrealistic to attempt to separate economic power from political influence. "It's nice to have an uncle who pays for everything but this is only in tales, not in reality," stated the Italian leader.

Militants brought to justice

NINETEEN Islamist militants are facing trial by the Supreme State Security Court in connection with the assassination of a police officer and two bomb attacks in 1993 and 1994. The militants, who belong to the underground Al-Gama'a Al-Islamiya, are accused of killing Lt. Col. Ahmed Shaalan of the State Security Investigation Department at Shoubra El-Kheima, an industrial suburb north of Cairo. They are also charged with bombing two cinemas in Helwan and a tourist bus in Old Cairo, killing a police constable and wounding 16 other Egyptians and foreigners.

The accused confessed that they bombed the two Helwan cinemas because they showed movies of the Cairo Film Festival containing sex scenes. The assassination of Shaalan was an act of revenge for the death of a militant as he attempted to escape after taking part in the attack on the cinemas. The bombing of the tourist bus was intended to discredit the government, the accused said.

Nine of them face the death penalty.

Bakri on trial

PROSECUTION authorities have decided to put Mustafa Bakri, former chief editor of the newspaper *Al-Ahram*, on trial by the Supreme State Security Court on charges of libel, bribery and forgery. The action was taken against Bakri and reporter Ahmed Fikri for publishing a news story considered defamatory to Jihan El-Sadat, widow of the late President Anwar El-Sadat, and her family.

The story, published on 19 August, carried the sensational headline: "Jihan El-Sadat has an illegitimate child." But, according to newspaper officials, it was intended to expose the malpractices of civil servants at birth registration offices.

Fikri obtained a birth certificate and registered himself as the father, and Jihan El-Sadat as the mother, of a baby boy. Toward the end of the story, Fikri acknowledged that the certificate contained false information and that he managed to acquire it after bribing a civil servant at the registry office. He said he used the name of Mrs Sadat to show how public figures could unwittingly become involved in forgery and bribery.

The civil servant, Kamal Zaki Garass, is facing trial on charges of bribery.

After the publication of the story caused a furore, Bakri was dismissed from the post of *Al-Ahram*'s chief editor by the Liberal Party chairman, Mustafa Kamel Murad. Bakri is facing another trial on charges of slandering Mohamed Ali Mahgoub, former minister of Awqaf (religious endowments).

Retired generals seek October spirit

A retired army general is attempting to establish a new political party whose aim is to prepare the nation for fresh confrontation with Israel. Shaden Shehab investigates

Mohamed Mnawad Gad El-Moula, a retired army brigadier-general, is taking action to establish a new political party, whose objective is to revive the "victorious spirit" of the October 1973 War. Contrary to the late President Anwar El-Sadat's pledge that there would be no more war between the two nations, Gad El-Moula believes that future conflict is inevitable. "This is why we have to prepare for a fresh confrontation with Israel," he told *Al-Ahram Weekly*.

Gad El-Moula, backed by 120 other would-be founders, submitted an application two weeks ago for a licence to establish an "October Party" to the Political Parties Committee — the semi-governmental body whose task is to consider the cases of groups wishing to be licensed as official political parties.

According to Gad El-Moula, the group includes six retired army major-generals who fought in the 1973 War, two former police major-generals and seven university professors. Also included are 30 other professionals and 75 workers and peasants.

"Israel is not prepared to give up its ambitions. This is clearly reflected in the declarations made by its leaders — and not only Benjamin Netanyahu," Gad El-Moula said. While stressing that peace was a strategic objective for Egypt, he said that "for others, it appears to be a truce for catching their breath."

Therefore, he continued, "we have no choice but to adopt a platform for rebuilding a strong Egypt and preparing a new generation capable of fighting any attackers."

According to Gad El-Moula, the new party's platform links normalising relations with Israel to "reclaiming the [occupied] land,

establishing a Palestinian state and showing commitment to the removal of weapons of mass destruction from the Middle East."

On domestic issues, the new party champions democracy "in all its forms," Gad El-Moula said. "We call for the election of the president and vice-president by direct ballot and for the legislative authority to include a senate as well as the People's Assembly."

The party's economic platform combines a capitalist programme with some elements of socialist thought, supporting private ownership and encouraging private enterprise while making strategic industries the government's responsibility.

To finance the party, members will pay a LE20 annual membership fee, and the group will also rely on private donations.

Parliamentary fray over private universities

As the chairman of the Doctors Syndicate escalates a crusade against the newly-established private universities, the minister of education rallies to defend them. Gamal Essam El-Din reports on the debate

Hamdi El-Sayed, chairman of the Doctors Syndicate, has threatened to file a lawsuit with the Administrative Court seeking an injunction to bar the Sixth of October University — one of four newly-established private universities — from opening a faculty of medicine. El-Sayed contends that Sixth of October, along with the other private colleges, does not have the necessary laboratories and hospitals to provide students with an up-to-standard medical education.

None of the new universities had prepared proper facilities for medical training, he told *Al-Ahram Weekly*, despite the fact that the law allowing their establishment was passed four years ago. "But one of them, the Sixth of October University, hastily decided to start medical training this year, although it lacks the necessary laboratories, medical facilities and a well-defined curricula and study timetable."

Addressing a joint meeting of the health and education committees of the People's Assembly last week, El-Sayed vowed that the graduates of private universities would not be admitted to the Doctors Syndicate, and thus would not be able to practise medicine.

Explaining his position, El-Sayed, himself a member of parliament, made it clear that he "did not object to the new law or the presidential decree that led to the establishment of these private universities. But what I do object to is their hasty decision to open their doors to medical students before completing the necessary facilities."

He disclosed that the syndicate had submitted a memorandum to President Hosni Mubarak,

asking him to issue instructions to private universities that before opening faculties of medicine, they should first complete the construction of hospitals and medical laboratories.

In an apparent response to El-Sayed's remarks, Education Minister Hussein Kamel Bahadddin said on Saturday that private universities "are here to stay" and spoke of the state's "firm commitment to providing them with full support." The executive regulations of the Private Universities Law would be issued within days, Bahadddin promised.

El-Sayed vowed that the Doctors Syndicate would stand firm on its refusal to allow medical graduates of private universities to practise medicine unless the universities provided the necessary facilities and complied with the standards of state universities. He added that the syndicate was determined to file the lawsuit with the Administrative Court unless the Sixth of October University reversed its decision to begin a course of medical studies on 27 October.

Despite his previous insistence on his objection to the Sixth of October medical school was not a reflection of opposition to private education in general, El-Sayed expressed a fear that private faculties of medicine would become an exclusive gathering place for the sons and daughters of the "rich elite who believe that their money can buy their children a good education." This fear, he said, was based on "the fact that businessmen are the major sponsors of these universities."

Khairi El-Samra, a member of the Shura

Council and a former dean of Qasr El-Aini Faculty of Medicine, took a different view, strongly defending the role of private faculties of medicine. "Egypt is in desperate need of this type of faculty, and their founders acted from patriotic motives and not out of sheer financial ambition," he argued. El-Samra described the education provided by the faculties of medicine in the state universities as "empty talk."

According to Samir Badawi, president of the Sixth of October University, his university will in fact be able to provide the requisite facilities for a proper medical education. He said that Giza Governor Abdel-Rehim Shehata has agreed to allow the training of students in a Giza hospital. One hundred and fifty students, whose total marks in the secondary school certificate ranged between 84 and 96 per cent, have been accepted by the university's Faculty of Medicine, he added.

He also pointed out that the Syndicate of Pharmacologists has said it will allow graduates of the Pharmacology Faculty to join the syndicate. El-Sayed then accused Badawi of striking an "under the table" deal with the pharmacologists. This provoked an angry response from Badawi, who threatened to walk out of the meeting. El-Sayed then hastily apologised.

At the end of the debate, it was emphasised that the establishment of the private universities was not a step towards privatising the entire university education system. The joint meeting of the two committees also recommended that the executive regulations of the Private Universities

Law should make it clear that the Ministry of Education has the authority to supervise and closely monitor the performance of these private universities. However, the committees did not take a position on the issue of the medical students.

Mahmoud Mahfouz, a former health minister and chairman of the Shura Council's Education and Scientific Research Committee, told the *Weekly* that he was strongly opposed to El-Sayed's policy of refusing syndicate membership to private university medical graduates. "In fact," insisted Mahfouz, who is himself the president of a new private university, "it is the Ministry of Health that is officially and legally responsible for providing medical graduates with a licence to practise medicine." But, responded El-Sayed, syndicate membership was itself a precondition for a medical graduate to obtain a Ministry of Health licence.

Mahfouz pointed out that the Private Universities Law states that a representative of the Ministry of Education should be positioned in each private university and that the Supreme Universities Council has the final word on the degrees awarded by these universities. "So, I don't know why the chairman of the Doctors Syndicate has made an issue out of nothing and passed a hasty judgement on the performance of the new private universities," he argued.

Edited by Wadie Kirolos

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Business only at MENA III

With less than three weeks to go before the start of the Cairo Middle East and North Africa Economic Conference (MENA III), the organisers, the Egyptian Foreign Ministry and the Geneva-based World Economic Forum, are putting the final touches on preparations for the event. The conference will group delegates from 88 states, 65 Arab and international organisations and financial institutions, and over 1,000 key businessmen.

MENA III, which is the successor to the 1994 Casablanca Conference and the 1995 Amman Conference, is intended to be "a conference for business", said Ambassador Ahmed Abul-Kheir, the conference's assistant coordinator at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Consequently, he told *Al-Ahram Weekly*, the ministry is attempting to facilitate and promote match-making opportunities between the various international businessmen who will attend.

That much is clear at least from the theme of the conference, which was selected as "Building for the Future: Creating an Investor-Friendly Environment". Promoting investment and economic development in the region is the focus, he stated.

To smooth out the match-making path and provide an environment conducive to business, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has, among other things, arranged for a special secretariat to facilitate arranging appointments and designating booths for meetings between businessmen. It has also sought to organise the establishment of business centres for some 18 countries, including the US, Israel and Palestine.

Aiding the ministry with the preparations is the World Economic Forum (WEF), headed by Klaus Schwab. The WEF's president, who arrived in Cairo last week to meet with President Hosni Mubarak and Foreign Minister Amr Moussa, explained that the forum's involvement in MENA III is manifold. First, it helps in mobilising the business community.

"I have to say that this was not very easy this time, because if you put yourself in the place of a company's president and look, for example, at the outcome of the recent Washington summit, you have doubts," Schwab told the *Weekly*. "Therefore, we were working hard in order to mobilise a very strong business contingent... at the conference."

The WEF was also involved in sending invitations to ministers of finance, econ-

As the final preparations for MENA III fall into place, the conference's organisers and participants fear that regional political tension may undermine its success, writes Doaa El-Bey

omy and development of various countries, and is taking an active role in overseeing the organisation of the meetings and the networking process.

"Networking is a very important factor because it ensures that every participant who comes to the meeting is able to locate a counterpart who shares the same strategic interests," said Schwab. "Now, this can be done via projects. For example, we have prepared a project list that will allow people to scan available opportunities in advance of the conference. We will also provide a powerful and sophisticated e-mail and networking system linked to an electronic database which allows the participants to immediately identify others with similar interests."

But as the organisers conclude their preparations and the delegates ready themselves for MENA III, politics and economics have found themselves to be uneasy bed-fellows. Doubts have emerged about the success of the conference in light of the recent political tension in the region.

Abul-Kheir noted that the problems confronting the peace process might have an impact on the outcome of the conference. "I say 'might' because we have some time until the conference begins. A breakthrough might take place, but without that breakthrough, we cannot avoid this unfortunate situation," he stated. "We need a breakthrough to make this conference a completely business-like gathering."

One such breakthrough, said Abul-Kheir, could be an agreement on the Hebron troop redeployment, an issue that has for months been a bone of contention between Israeli and Palestinian officials. However, on its own, a Hebron settlement may not be enough.

"What would satisfy us is not only an agreement on Hebron, but also a very quick and serious move to continue the peace process as well," he noted. "Of course, this situation will have an impact on the outcome of the conference."

Elaborating on this point, Abul-Kheir pointed out that MENA III is a direct spin-off of the 1991 Madrid talks. This conference in Cairo, he stressed, is based on the principle of regional cooperation, but cooperation is likely to be more difficult than fact if the peace process continues on its current course.

The stumbling blocks that have littered the path to peace, however, will not necessarily preclude the promotion of inter-Arab cooperation during MENA III, said Abul-Kheir. To date, he said, the Arabs have concluded many economic agreements through the framework of the Arab League, and also recently agreed on the establishment of a regional free trade area.

"The Arabs should cooperate and organise themselves in order to formulate a unified position at the conference," stated Abul-Kheir. "Arab interests should come first," he stressed, adding that "losing our identity within the framework of the new regional arrangements will have a very negative impact on the Arab world."

Schwab agrees that the conference will stress the business angle, but believes that politics will not be as much of a sticking point as many may fear. In the final analysis, he said, while the peace process will be determined by political decisions, it is important to remember that the economic dimension is very important and is linked to the political dimension.

"There is no peace without economic progress, and in order to sustain any political progress... it is very important to have the involvement of the business community," stated Schwab.

Nevertheless, despite a desire to witness the realisation of substantial steps on the road to peace, Schwab is quick to point out that the show must go on. It would have been difficult to postpone the conference until a favourable political climate is created, he stated, because the Casablanca and Amman conferences have initiated a certain dynamism and momentum.

"Everyone realised that if the conference was postponed or cancelled, the momentum would have been lost and not easily regained," said the WEF president. That much is clear, he added, by the fact that the Egyptian government decided to go ahead with MENA III, as planned. In reaching this decision, the government did not succumb to any outside pressure, stressed Schwab, referring to recent fears that Egypt would delay or cancel the conference because of Israeli intransigence on the Hebron and other issues linked to

the peace process.

With this, Abul-Kheir concurs. The conference, he said, is an invaluable opportunity for Egypt and Egyptian businessmen to highlight the country's progress on the economic reform front, and to attract foreign investment. In short, he noted, the pros of holding the conference as scheduled by far outweighed the cons.

"The business world, of course, would like to witness political progress and regional stability," Schwab told the *Weekly*. "But the aim of businessmen is to do business, and the Cairo conference will be instrumental in facilitating transactions."

In this light, MENA III is the logical continuation of the previous two economic conferences held in Morocco and Jordan. "If you look at the Casablanca conference, it was viewed by the business community as a curiosity. If you look at the Amman conference, it was a chance for businessmen to get acquainted," said Schwab. "But in Cairo, the objective is to do business."

Given these preparations, the success of the conference will, to a great extent, be measured by how well all the various factors fall into place. The conference's programmes will be instrumental in bringing the delegates together. MENA III, he said, boasts a complex programme including 50 different sessions, each with a number of activities. These sessions will serve as valuable networking opportunities. "Everything is in place to ensure that participating business leaders will find partners and can also be involved in concrete regional development projects," Schwab explained.

This kind of image-building and networking, it seems, will be the deciding factor for the conference's success, and could offset any negative effects of a seemingly stalled peace process. Judith Barnett, acting deputy assistant secretary for the Middle East and North Africa at the International Trade Administration, said via Worldnet Dialogue, a satellite hookup through the US Information Agency's Worldnet Network, that the political tension has left its mark on regional cooperation but has not affected bilateral cooperation.

"We would be in complete denial not to

admit that there is a certain degree of sadness, as we go into this conference, vis-à-vis the regional projects," stated Barnett. "The Jordan Valley projects are slow, the regional business council is slow and the Middle East Bank is slow. But the bilateral projects are not slow."

Highlighting the factors likely to be of importance to US companies attending the conference, Barnett said they will mainly focus on bilateral projects between the US on one hand and Egypt, Oman and Jordan and other states on the other, for example.

"I firmly believe that those projects will go ahead, especially since... people are adapting psychologically to the peace process," she noted, adding that this adjustment process takes time. For example, nine months after the Amman conference, 50 of the 150 companies that went to Amman, returned to Jordan to look at projects and bid on tenders. Throughout the Middle East, she stated, US companies have been bidding on and winning major projects.

Basically, stressed Barnett, "it is not worth the time of a corporate president or vice-president to come to a conference that is just a conference — the bottom line has to be there, or they won't." In other words, they are coming to find roads into a regional market of nearly 200 million consumers, and the most logical launching point for expanding these business ties would be through Egypt or Israel, she stressed.

To this end, Barnett explained that two weeks ago, US ambassadors throughout the Middle East organised a promotional tour to the US for some of the region's businessmen. The tour, which included stops in New York, Dallas and Los Angeles, was well received. "We had 130 companies in Los Angeles, 150 in New York and 130 in Dallas promising to attend the conference," said Barnett. In all, nearly 600 US private businessmen and corporate representatives will attend MENA III. "We're almost full," she stated. "We need almost no more promotion."

In addition to the ambassadors' tour, the US Department of Commerce has begun the match-making process. "We are going to contact every single registrant from the US side, provide them with a list of who is going to participate from the Middle East, so that we can match-make appointments and provide all US companies attending with a full schedule," she added.

UNCC pays out claims

THE GOVERNING Council of the United Nations Compensation Commission (UNCC), during its 22nd session this month in Geneva, approved the sixth and final instalment of claims submitted by individuals who had to depart from Iraq or Kuwait as a result of the 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. These compensation awards fall under the category "A" claims. With this final instalment, which equals roughly \$320 million for 80,500 claimants, over 922,000 claims in category "A" have been approved and a total amount of about \$3.2 billion has been awarded.

The total value of compensations awarded by the council to date has reached \$4 billion, a figure which includes the amounts approved for category "A" claims, as well as category "B" claims for serious personal injury or death, and category "C", which involves individual claims up to \$100,000. However, only \$13.5 million has been actually paid to the 4,000 category "B" claimants, due to a lack of available resources.

The availability of funds largely depends on the implementation of Security Council Resolution 986 providing for the oil-for-food deal, which allows Iraq to sell \$2 billion in oil over an initial period of six months. Thirty per cent of the proceeds of this sale would go to the Compensation Fund for the payment of claims. Members of the council stated that all parties should exert the utmost effort to boost the implementation of Resolution 986. Until this resolution is implemented, funds are made available through Resolution 778, which urges countries holding Iraqi funds, oil and oil products, as well as those owing money to Iraq for oil, to release these assets to the UN.

The Governing Council is expected to hold its next meeting in mid-December. The council was created in 1991 as a subsidiary organ of the Security Council to decide on claims submitted by victims of Iraq's seven-month occupation of Kuwait.

Bank plan shelved

THE INTERNATIONAL sanctions imposed on Libya five years ago have undermined plans to establish a joint Egyptian-Libyan bank for the financing of trade between the two countries. The bank was also to oversee financial operations and transactions between the two nations.

"The time is not yet ripe to establish a joint bank between the two countries," said Abdel-Samir Isma, secretary-general of the Egyptian Federation of Chambers of Commerce.

Isma stated that the idea discussed recently in Tripoli by a committee formed to facilitate trade between Egypt and Libya was shelved due to the economic boycott imposed on Libya by the US and Europe and the fact that Libyan assets in foreign banks may be frozen. However, the two countries are searching for alternatives.

"There is, among other proposals, the idea of opening a bank account in each of the two countries to settle the tab for import and export transactions, commodity exchanges and run periodic clearance settlements for businessmen," said Isma.

IG share offer

THE HOLDING Company for Chemical Industries is inviting anchor investors to bid for the 90 per cent offering in its wholly-owned subsidiary, Industrial Gases (IG). The offering includes 72,000 shares of the company's equity while the remaining 8,000 shares are earmarked for IG's Employee Shareholder's Association.

Azza Abul-Farag, head of IG's technical department, said that offering the company's shares through public subscription had not been envisaged because IG is looking for an anchor investor to inject investments needed to modernise its plants and market its products.

"Bidders have to demonstrate their ability to improve the company's market share and upgrade its technical position," said Abul-Farag. IG has long considered selling a large stake of its equity, and foreign and local investors were invited to visit the company's plants in order to familiarise themselves with its production techniques and product line. Bidders have until the end of November to submit their bids.

IG posted an after-tax net profit of LE6.5 million on sales totalling LE43 million during fiscal year 1995-1996.

Privatisation's boom and gloom

Economic experts tell Gamal Essam El-Din that speedy privatisation may be good for the state budget, but it is not without its faults

Although government efforts to accelerate the privatisation programme have resulted in the sale of shares in a large number of public sector companies over the last two months, experts say the pace of the programme has negatively impacted on the privatisation process itself.

Discussing the government's latest moves, Public Sector Minister Atef Ebeid noted, at a recent press conference, that the acceleration in the pace of privatisation has successfully resulted in the sale of more than 50 per cent of the government's holdings in 13 public sector enterprises. Encouraged by the success of the recent sales, the government then announced plans to sell off the majority of its shares in another 91 companies over the next two years, of which 27 are to be offered on the stock exchange and 64 to strategic investors.

However, a number of economic observers and brokerage companies noted that the government's decision to speed up sales has led to a deviation from the prime objectives of the privatisation programme in a number of ways.

According to Mustafa El-Said, a former economy minister and

chairman of the People's Assembly Economic Committee, accelerating the programme over a short period of time has resulted in the fragmentation of ownership in newly-privatised companies among a very large number of subscribers.

For example, he said, this was evident in the privatisation of Kafir El-Zayat Pesticides and Chemicals (KZ) and El-Nasr Company for Dehydration of Agricultural Products (NCDA), two profitable public sector enterprises.

The two companies decided to sell off 600,000 and 240,000 shares respectively, but due to significant investor interest, both companies, in an attempt to meet all requests, resorted to allocating only 5 shares to each subscriber. As a result, the shares were distributed among a large number of subscribers.

"We cannot assume that this large number of shareholders, each owning only 5 shares, will have any influence on the company's management decisions, or improve performance in the company," El-Said said.

Amany Hamed, executive manager of Okaz Brokerage Company, agrees with El-Said. She says that the government's bid to

speed up privatisation was praised by international financial organisations such as the IMF and the World Bank, yet it brought the stock market a bevy of problems.

The first of these, she explained, is due to the "allocation system", in which the holding company that is putting the shares up for sale is forced to allocate shares proportionally to meet the increased demand.

This system, she said, makes it difficult for brokerage companies to generate satisfying commissions on their privatisation sales since a brokerage company usually charges clients a LE2 per share commission on each request if it succeeds in buying them the entire number of shares requested. But the allocation system prevents brokers from realising a reasonable profit margin because commissions on these kinds of sales are less than LE2 per share.

This system is also leading to wide-scale speculation on the market. Confronted with this challenge, Hamed said that brokerage companies and mutual funds resorted to what is now called on the stock market "under-the-table deals" in an attempt to double their transactions and

raise their commissions on shares.

To get around the allocation system, brokerage companies submit requests for shares using the names of relatives, friends and cooperative clients in order to purchase as many shares as possible. They then resell these shares to other clients at higher prices, taking advantage of Egyptian and foreign investor interest in purchasing public sector shares up for sale on the stock market.

This kind of speculation contributed to the skyrocketing of share prices to unrealistic levels. Hamed said, citing the example of the shares of South Cairo and Giza Mills and Bakeries Company, which increased from LE10 last May to their current level of LE60 and Kafir El-Zayat Pesticides and Chemicals, which jumped from LE29 in August to LE45 this month.

"This type of speculation took on new dimensions when the government decided two months ago to speed up, in a short period of time, the privatisation of around 15 companies," she stated.

Moreover, the fact that the government sells public sector shares on the stock market at fixed prices

is another major reason behind the emergence of this "black market," noted Mustafa El-Said.

"Fixing the share prices provides individuals and brokerage companies with a golden opportunity to generate greater profits through trading these shares later at higher prices," he said. "It also comes at the expense of the government, which is denied the fair market value for the sale of its public asset. The government should auction off these shares, selling them to the highest bidder."

Hamed also suggested that the cabinet's Privatisation Committee should draw up a new privatisation programme with a clear-cut schedule. This new programme, she said, should be based on the privatising of only eight companies per month, with the Capital Market Authority and brokerage companies informed of the names of the companies as early as possible so that they have time to analyse these companies' balance sheets in order to better advise their clients. Right now, she said, brokerage companies discover the names of companies to be privatised only through the newspapers.

Sabry Aglan, an adviser to Atef Ebeid, admitted that speeding up

the privatisation process has created some problems, but argued that the actions of investors and brokerage companies on the market were the real cause of these problems. Aglan stated that the government has adopted various methods of privatisation, including direct sales to a strategic investor, selling to employees, competitive bidding and public subscription.

"We have more than one option to ensure that the privatisation programme achieves the best results," he said.

The policy of setting a fixed price for the shares to be traded, he said, is the product of detailed studies conducted on the companies to be sold. The policy is also mainly aimed at providing a large number of investors, irrespective of their income, an opportunity to buy into these companies. The fact that some of these investors re-sell the shares at a higher price in order to realise sizable profits on the short run is beside the point.

Aglan said that the holding company which conducts the public offering is usually forced to resort to the allocation system in an attempt to meet the rocketing demand for shares of newly-privatised companies.

Market report

Computer glitch stalls trading

Lebanese Cuisines now in Egypt with the opening of



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FOR THE third week in a row, the new central depository system inadvertently thwarted trading activity as brokers, who were struggling to familiarise themselves with the set-up, were confronted with a system crash. On 13 October, trading temporarily ground to a halt as the new computer system crashed due to an overload of clearing and settlement orders. But, based on the trading at hand, the General Market Index dropped by 1.52 points to close at 232.68 for the week ending 17 October.

The market's big winners again were the milling companies, with the Middle and West Delta Mills Company recording the highest value of transactions. Trading LE14.7 million in shares, the company's stock transactions accounted for 16.73 per cent of total trading on the market. Also under the spotlight, the Upper Egypt Mills Company shares were the most actively traded, closing 17.62 per cent of the total turnover. However, the shares of both companies closed lower than their opening price, with the Middle and West Delta's shares dropping by LE1 to level off at LE22.5 while those of the Upper Egypt Mills closed at LE45.2 compared to their opening price of LE46.75.

It was the shares of the Mayo Publishing and Printing House (Dar Mayo) which registered the greatest increase in value, gaining 23.53 per cent on their opening value to level off at LE10.5. On the other hand, shares of the Cairo Housing and Development Company registered a 22.48 per cent decrease in value to close at LE13.9. Similarly, shares of the Alexandria Portland Cement Company lost LE22.25 per share to level off at LE422.75, while those of the Alexandria National Iron and Steel Company dropped by LE7 to close at LE146.

The financial sector fared well during the week, with its index gaining 6.6 points to close at 290.23 points. Credit International Bank's shares gained LE30 to end at LE335, while those of the National Societe Generale Bank gained LE28 to level off at LE508. Shares of the Commercial International Bank, however, lost LE25 per share to close at LE440.

In all, the shares of 24 companies increased in value, 25 decreased and 34 remained unchanged.

Edited by Ghada Ragab

Vers un nouveau rôle de la France dans la région ?

Lisez

- Chirac au Moyen-Orient
- Un nouveau rôle de la France dans la région
- Enquête
- L'Europe veut les dividendes politiques de son soutien économique
- Intégristes
- Le danger maîtrisé des Afghans égyptiens
- Baisse des taxes
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Entretien
Mahfouz parle de Chahine

Nouvelle
La Circoncision de Youssef Idriss

Rédacteur en Chef
Exécutif
Mohamed Salmawy

Président et Rédacteur en Chef
Ibrahim Nafie

هكذا من الأصل

Sea-sawing fortunes

The ongoing attacks and counter-attacks taking place in Iraqi Kurdistan between the two main Kurdish factions, the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) and the Popular Union of Kurdistan (PUK), demonstrate the fragility of the political settlement of the Kurdish question implemented in the wake of the Gulf War. Although a Kurdish parliament based on a 50-50 formula was set up in 1991, the two Kurdish partners failed to bury their differences and cooperate. Instead, they have engaged in a civil war that has taken the lives of more than 2,000 Kurds since 1994.

The recent fighting leaves the region on the brink of an all-out war. The KDP massed thousands of fighters around the region's de facto capital Arbil last week and vowed to defend it against the PUK at all costs. The PUK had earlier succeeded in re-establishing its hold on most of the positions it had lost during the 31 August intervention of the Iraqi armed forces on the side of the KDP.

Pointing to possible further Iraqi intervention, Iraqi tanks allegedly have taken up offensive positions 20km away from Arbil. This move was described by the Iraqi National Congress (INC), an umbrella organisation for the Iraqi opposition, as a dangerous development. In a statement issued in London last week, the INC called upon the international community to prevent the Iraqi president from taking military action that would violate Security Council Resolution 688 and would worsen the humanitarian tragedy already unfolding in northern Iraq.

The situation in Iraqi Kurdistan, to say the least, is volatile. The balance of power keeps on shifting between the two factions. Last month, the KDP was in control of the previous PUK strongholds of Arbil and Sulaymaniya as well as Kof Sanjaq, Degala, and other small localities. In the heat of military victory, KDP leader Massoud Barzani had declared that his rival PUK leader Jalal Talabani and his party were finished politically and militarily. In the same vein, he had issued an amnesty to the fighters of the PUK.

Last week, however, only one month after the fall of Sulaymaniya to the KDP, the PUK managed with the presumed help of Iran to recapture Sulaymaniya, as well as Kof Sanjaq, Degala and other small localities while moving towards Arbil. It was Talabani's turn to declare that Barzani was finished politically and to issue a general amnesty to the KDP fighters.

In another reversal of fortunes, Barzani's forces launched a major counter-attack last Friday, after having regained control over the key town of Kof Sanjaq a few days earlier. This KDP counter-attack resulted in the recapture of Qala Diza and Dukan on Sunday, leaving only Sulaymaniya in the hands of the PUK. The next day, however, the PUK was able to regain full control of Dukan and the strategic hydroelectric Dukan Dam which supplies both Arbil and Sulaymaniya. The recapture of the Dukan Dam enabled the PUK to cut off the power supply to Arbil and to block the way to Sulaymaniya. On Monday, nevertheless, Barzani declared that he would be able to recapture Sulaymaniya within 48 hours.

One thing is certain now: the two-year conflict proved that neither of the two factions can achieve a decisive victory unless supported by an external power.

Also, the longer the fighting continues, the more difficult a settlement of the conflict will be. Further fuelling the fire, the recent attacks and counter-attacks have convinced both parties that the other has betrayed the Kurdish cause. While the PUK accuses Barzani of selling out to Saddam Hussein, the KDP accuses the PUK of bringing Iran into the conflict. The KDP claims that thousands of Iranian revolutionary guards together with the Badr regiment, the wing of the Iraqi Shi'ite Supreme Council based in and supported by Iran, were taking part in the fighting.

Mohamed Marouf, the KDP spokesman in London, told *Al-Ahram Weekly* that the fact that the PUK has arms is strong proof that Iran is supplying them with weapons. "When Talabani was defeated last month, his forces crossed the border into Iran. The Iranian authorities confiscated all their weapons. Then where did they get the weapons they used in entering Sulaymaniya?" he asked. He added that Arbil is still in the hands of the KDP and "we will defend it till the end". He expressed a deep fear that the Iranian intervention will lead to Iraqi retaliation and the eruption of a regional war.

The PUK strongly denies getting help from Iran. A PUK official source in London described the accusation as "an unfounded lie." He ascribed it to the

Doaa El-Bey assesses the fluid situation in Iraqi Kurdistan where positions are changing hands fast

KDP's attempts to tarnish the image of the PUK and to justify seeking the help of Iraqi troops to capture Arbil last August. He emphasised that the PUK achieved its recent victory through self-reliance, only "making use of the people's dissatisfaction with the Iraqi troops' intervention at the request of the KDP." He ruled out that the current situation sets the stage for an Iranian-Iraqi confrontation "simply because the Iranian troops are not present in the region. The PUK will never allow any country to interfere in the region as the KDP did."

Rhetoric aside, Iraqi Kurdistan is still part of Iraq and any equation between Iraq and any other foreign power is simply wrong. But what can Iraq do, given all the constraints imposed on it? There are only two options: either to directly support the KDP in its battle with the PUK or to play the role of the mediator between the two parties. The first option may subject Iraq to another US missile attack and the postponement of the badly needed oil-for-food deal. It can also involve the region in a full-scale war. The second option is more viable.

Hopes have been raised about the success of American mediation in settling the differences between the two warring factions. US Assistant Secretary of State Robert Pelletreau met separately with both Barzani and Talabani this week and called on both to stop fighting immediately. But America has made the same call several times in the last two years. Will the call be heeded this time?

US warns Europe

THE US has warned Europe not to meddle in the peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians, saying it was unwise to try to create a "mini-UN" in the Middle East. A US State Department spokesman welcomed in a statement on Tuesday the positive and active role played by the Europeans in providing financial assistance to the Palestinians, but stated clearly that the negotiations on the thorny issues of the peace process involved the US, Israel and Palestinians exclusively. He insisted that the US was indispensable as a mediator because it had been chosen by the concerned parties nearly 30 years ago and this choice should be respected by the Europeans.

The statement highlights the disagreements that have emerged between the US and Europe during the past week. In the politest of terms, US Secretary of State Warren Christopher urged the EU members to keep a low profile in Middle East diplomacy in letters addressed to the EU foreign ministers separately as well as the Irish Foreign Minister, Dick Spring, whose country currently holds the EU presidency.

Spring said yesterday the EU foreign ministers were due to discuss appointing a special EU envoy to the Middle East in their meeting in Luxembourg on Monday. He made clear the envoy would not be directly involved in the peace negotiations.

Diplomatic sources said that the French answered in the same tone, simply asserting that France wants to make a political contribution to the peace process. Also on Tuesday, the Foreign Office in London announced that Foreign Secretary Malcolm Rifkind will tour the Middle East between 3-6 November to highlight the need for progress in the peace process. The US privately maintains that the Palestinians and Israelis would exploit divergences in US and EU views to their advantage if European diplomats say that the US fears that EU involvement would increase the pressure on Israel to soften its hardline stance in the peace talks.

Rocket attack

ISRAELI helicopters fired rockets and machine-guns at Hizbullah positions in southern Lebanon before dawn yesterday. The Iranian-backed group answered by firing mortar shells and anti-tank rockets at a post held by the Israeli-backed South Lebanon Army at the edge of the eastern sector of Israel's so-called security zone in South Lebanon. The AP news agency reported. Lebanese security sources said the Israeli rockets hit a car in the village of Qilya but caused no casualties. The Israelis denied the attack, claiming that the helicopters were on a live-fire exercise. A US-brokered ceasefire agreement in April barred both sides from targeting civilian areas.

Meanwhile, Lebanese President Elias Hrawi has been consulting with members of parliament to pick a new prime minister in the wake of recent parliamentary elections. The incumbent prime minister, Rafik Hariri, is widely expected to be given a third term.

Erbakan survives — for now

Although Turkish Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan emerged unscathed from the latest threat to his leadership, escaping a censure motion by opposition parties, secularists in Turkey believe that the sweet taste of victory will be short-lived as they vowed to continue their efforts to bring down his three-month-old coalition government.

Speaking to *Al-Ahram Weekly* earlier this week, some Turkish analysts said that there is more to the current crisis than meets the eye. "This is primarily a battle between the secularists and the Islamists. It has very little to do with Erbakan's visit to Libya, damaging Turkish pride or questionable foreign policies. The secularists were waiting for any mistake and they jumped on the first one they got," Gengiz Cander of the moderate *Sabah* newspaper told the *Weekly*.

Voicing a similar opinion, pro-Refah sources in Ankara feel that it is not an issue of Erbakan visiting Libya, but one of Erbakan's attitude as displayed thus far in his premiership. "It was obvious that those opposed to the Refah/True Path Party's (DYP) coalition government, would do everything in their power to sabotage the trip," Hilmus Cevik, a prominent Turkish columnist told the *Weekly*.

Cevik added that the government was also at fault because it refused to give serious consideration to "misgivings" expressed by the foreign ministry regarding the visit to Libya, hastily arranging the tour at the last minute. All these things contributed to the failure of the trip.

For the last two weeks, since Erbakan made his Africa tour, which included Egypt, Libya and Nigeria, the pro-Islamist

and secular newspapers engaged in public slinging matches. Secular newspapers have been calling for an end to the coalition government to save what they described as "the nation's secular soul," which has been constantly threatened since Refah came to power. *Milliyet* and *Hurriyet*, two secular-oriented newspapers, reported that the opposition Democratic Left Party (DSP) leader, Bulent Ecevit, has called on Mesut Yilmaz and Tansu Ciller to reach an agree-

ing coalition, three opposition parties — ANAP, DSP and the Nationalist Action Party — have presented two motions in parliament calling for an investigation of Erbakan's visit to Libya.

"This campaign may tarnish Erbakan's reputation, but it is not strong enough to topple the coalition, especially while Tansu Ciller firmly supports it," a Refah member told the *Weekly* in a telephone interview from Ankara last Monday.

Some opposition parties, however, are acting as if the coalition government is doomed to collapse. ANAP leader Yilmaz has announced, on more than one occasion, that he is willing to enter into a coalition with Ciller's True Path Party. His proposals were met with a cold response by Ciller. Selcuk Gultasi, news editor of the Istanbul-based *Zaman* newspaper, says that while the opposition is campaigning fiercely to topple the coalition, President Suleyman Demirel wants to maintain the status quo, contrary to reports in the Turkish newspapers.

"He does not wish to see a government crisis. Besides, the other parties are desperate to reach almost any deal to avoid another election because they know that Refah would end up in the driver's seat," Gultasi said.

Many supporters of the nation's secular trend believe otherwise. Erbakan, they say, is the second choice of many Turks.

"Had the 1995 vote been a direct election, requiring a second-round majority, Erbakan would have lost badly to one of the leaders of any of the major secular parties. Erbakan has come to office through democratic procedures, but he lacks a democratic mandate," said Professor Binnaz

Turkey's secularists are waging a battle against the country's first Islamist premier. Omayma Abdel-Latif reports

Toprak, a specialist on Islamic movements in Turkey at Istanbul's Bogazi University.

Refah, which tripled its following from 1987 to 1995 in historically secular Turkey, is feeding on popular discontent with the secular political elite who are seen as corrupt and making minimal efforts to reform. But according to Toprak, the overwhelming majority of Turks continue to support a secular, pro-western direction.

"Backed by about three quarters of the electorate, Turkey's secular leaders should have every reason to be confident of winning the battle over their nation's soul, but this fractious lot — four major parties on the right and left dividing the secular vote — must overcome their differences and deal with the corruption in their ranks if they are to compete with Refah's grassroots organising skills," explained Professor Toprak.

Whether for or against Refah, the majority of Turkish analysts agree that Refah is the most well-organised political party in Turkey. Its long experience in local government politics has enhanced its grassroots links, while the majority of other (centrist and rightist) parties represent power group interests and retain no popular support.

The secular army, worried by the rise of Refah, has been working behind the scenes to keep the ruling coalition together, while at the same time issuing discreet reminders of the importance of maintaining a secular state. However, according to one Turkish diplomat, Turkey's

soldiers are not hovering on the sidelines waiting for an opportunity to leap back into politics, as happened before in 1960, 1971 and 1980. "The army exercises great influence nowadays by utilising the powers granted to it by the constitution. Its role is limited to advising the politicians, who usually comply," the diplomat source told the *Weekly*.

Now the real dilemma facing the Refah Party, as observers of the Islamic movement in Turkey see it, is whether to keep their electoral promises or to moderate their message. Erbakan's keynote address at the Refah Party convention last week was seen by many as a radical transformation of the party's political line. In an attempt to erase the party's more radical image, Erbakan voiced his support for secularism, democracy and Turkey's armed forces. He also expressed his wish to "come together with the leaders of the United States and other Western countries to discuss improved cooperation."

Erbakan is already moving in this direction, by embarking on a European tour that will take him to Italy and Germany. According to observers, the main aim of the trip is to alter Turkey's image of being "ignorant about Europe". While sources in Ankara believe that the Refah/True Path coalition government will hang on for some time, given foreign minister Tansu Ciller's cooperation, Turkey's secular forces will continue their campaign to bring down the government.

Hussein's war of words

Jordan's King Hussein, who has often adopted a conciliatory line with Israel, seems to have reached the end of his tether with the current hardline government. At the same time, he has emphasised his support for PNA leader Yasser Arafat. *Sherrine Bahaa* examines the latest developments in Amman

King Hussein of Jordan, a major advocate of the peace process, who until recently maintained a "special relationship" with Israel and was quick to dampen Arab scepticism over the prospects for peace, seems to have finally lost patience with the intransigence of the current Israeli position, describing Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as "arrogant".

"In the current situation, if we do not stride strongly forwards to achieve peace, anything imaginable can happen, including a revival of the situation in 1991, when Netanyahu wore his gas mask on television," said Hussein in a TV interview, referring to Netanyahu's famous appearance on CNN during the Gulf War.

He warned: "The alternative to peace is more awful than we can ever imagine."

Palestinians and other Arab parties to the peace process remain furious over Netanyahu's delay in implementing agreements signed with the previous Israeli government more than a year ago, principally troop redeployment in Hebron. Arab diplomats say that the Palestinian-Israeli agreement, signed at the White House in 1993, and the possibility of a deal between the Syrians and the Israelis, which had seemed imminent when the peace process was in full swing, have all been put in jeopardy by Netanyahu's ascension to power.

And now the special relationship between Israel and Jordan is at risk. Although Jordan is keeping its hotline with Israel, Jordanian officials are quick to explain that it is only doing so in the hope of saving the peace process. Jordan is aware that maintaining cordial relations with Israel in the midst of general Arab hostility would negatively affect its relationship with the rest of the Arab world.

In fact, Jordan's new harsh tone towards Israel is bound to go down well with the other Arab nations, where it will be viewed as a step in the direction of Arab solidarity.

Last week, King Hussein and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat exchanged visits in preparation for a possible tripartite summit to be held in Jordan between the two leaders and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. Equally important, King Hussein's dramatic visit to the self-rule areas gave a major push to the international community to support Arafat in his difficult negotiations with the right-wing Israeli government. It became clear during the visit that King Hussein was no longer pressing Arafat to yield to Netanyahu's repressive pre-conditions and make further concessions. On the contrary, he recalled Netanyahu's promise that there would be a breakthrough, which left the ball firmly in the Israeli court. For the first time, Hussein insisted that Israel was to blame for the current stalemate.

"The peace process will continue until the Palestinians win their rights over their land. We will support you with all our strength," Hussein told Arafat in Jericho.

Jordanian sources, however, attributed Hussein's dramatic change of tone to his fury at Israel's decision to open the tunnel

near Jerusalem's Islamic holy sites without consulting him. Dr Ishaq Al-Farhan, secretary-general of Jordan's Islamic Labour Front told *Al-Ahram Weekly*: "The Israelis are liars... They have tried to make the world believe that Jordan approved the opening of the tunnel. I am not defending the Jordanian government. The Israelis have actually met the head of the Islamic Waqf in Jerusalem, but we [the Jordanians] have rejected their request completely."

The fact that King Hussein is said to be a descendant of the Prophet Mohamed, thus giving him claims of custodianship over Arab Jerusalem's Islamic shrines, makes this a particularly sensitive issue. Jordan ruled Arab Jerusalem before Israel's occupation of the West Bank in 1967, and the October 1994 Jordanian-Israeli treaty recognises a special Jordanian role in the protection of the shrines.

King Hussein was unable to hide his bitter disappointment when the emergency Washington summit called by US President Bill Clinton ended with nothing except a few conciliatory statements from Benjamin Netanyahu. He told a TV interviewer after the summit: "The psychological moment when people begin to lose hope is close by."

Dr Gawad Azawi, former Jordanian minister of information, attributes Jordan's new impatience with Israel to two factors. First, there is a strong historical bond between the Jordanians and the Palestinians. Second, the Jordanians could not stand idly by, watching the effect of the closure of the Occupied Territories on the Palestinians, seeing Jerusalemites forbidden from entering or leaving the city, while the Israelis did their utmost to Judaise the holy city. "Such practices have a deep impact on all Jordanians," said Azawi. And, in the face of the policies of Netanyahu's extremist government, "People are asking where the dividends from the peace treaty are."

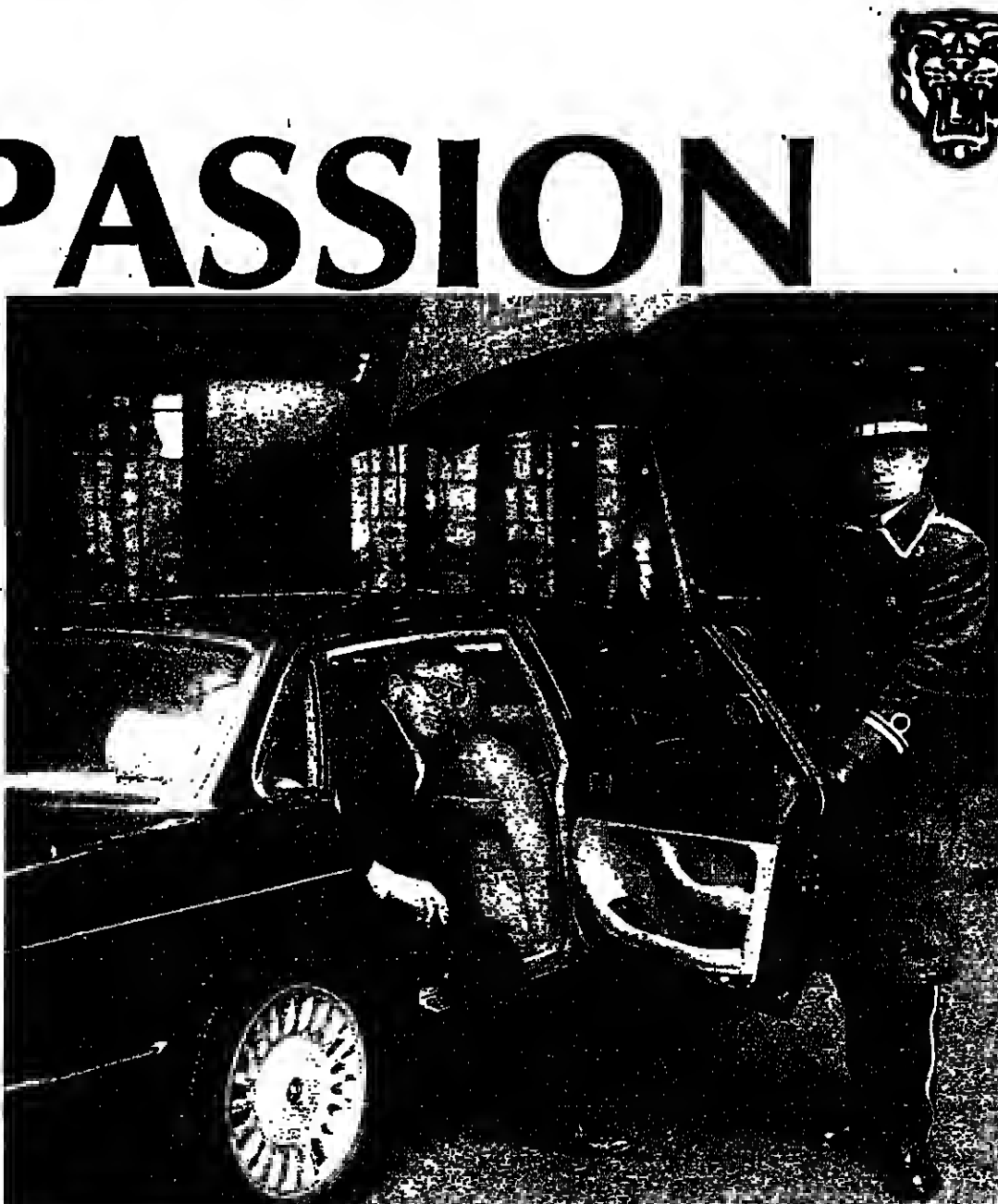
Yacoub Zeidan, secretary-general of Jordan's Communist Party, added that even from the economic and industrial point of view, Jordanians had not benefited from the deal with Israel.

Zeidan went as far as claiming that a continuation of Jordan's current relationship with Israel would actually endanger Jordan's economic future.

"When Jordan asked Israel for permission to export merchandise worth \$52 million annually to the West Bank, Israel refused. At the same time, Israel is dealing in goods worth \$4 billion a year in the West Bank and Gaza," Zeidan declared.

According to Azawi, deterioration in Israeli-Jordanian relations will also have repercussions for the Israeli people, particularly in the economic sphere.

It is this which could have prompted an openly concerned Israeli President Ezer Weizman to assume an active role. Rare in Israeli presidential history, Weizman's expected visit to Jordan, together with his visit last week to Egypt, are clear attempts to intercede and compensate for the intransigence of his premier.



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JAGUAR
EGYPT

How can Egypt and Pakistan develop more friendly relations?

Close and cordial relations already exist between Egypt and Pakistan. The two countries have entered a new era of increased cooperation in various socio-economic fields during recent years. They established a joint ministerial commission in 1989. Its first session was held in Cairo last year and the second session will be held in Islamabad this year. I am confident that such meetings will further strengthen the friendly relations between our two countries.

In the political sphere, Egypt and Pakistan share common perceptions on almost all the major regional and international issues. We also maintain close contacts at international forums to advance the interests of the Muslim umma. Egypt and Pakistan, being two of the leading countries in the Muslim world and also in their respective regions, have to work closely to advance not only their own causes but the causes of the Islamic world.

How can the two countries coordinate their efforts in fighting terrorism? Terrorism is a global problem today. Pakistan strongly condemns all forms of terrorism and is fully committed to eliminating this evil from its territory. To eradicate the menace, Pakistan signed an extradition treaty with Egypt in July 1994 and both countries have taken effective measures of cooperation in this regard. Pakistan has extradited some Egyptian nationals who were involved in terrorist activities against the Egyptian government as Pakistan does not wish that its territory be used against another country, especially a sister country like Egypt.

Pakistan is one of the leading defenders of Islamic countries' rights. What are your future plans in this field?

To summarise Pakistan's role within the Organisation of Islamic Conference in a few words, I would say that Pakistan represents the voice of reason, moderation and peace in the OIC. As such, it has made sincere and concerted efforts to build on the theme of unity, solidarity and the collective well-being of the Muslim umma to enable it to confront present-day challenges with courage and determination.

We take an active part in the meetings of the OIC and have presented a number of proposals in political, economic and cultural fields. We will continue to work for the betterment of the Islamic umma and to realise the objectives of the OIC with the aim of ensuring that the rights of our Muslim brethren are protected throughout the world.

What are the latest developments in the Kashmir issue and Pakistan-Indian relations?

Pakistan is a peace-loving country and has always worked to maintain peace and stability in the region. It has been Pakistan's persistent effort over the years to develop normal, cooperative and tension-free relations with India. However, in the absence of a resolution of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute, which has bedevilled relations between the two countries, South Asia has remained mired in tensions.

We want to hold meaningful talks with India. We want to make substantive progress on resolving the Jammu and Kashmir issue and other outstanding issues. It was in this spirit that, in my letter congratulating Indian Prime Minister Deve Gowda on his election, I reiterated our offer to hold talks aimed at the settlement of the issue of Jammu and Kashmir and other outstanding issues between Pakistan and India. While Prime Minister Gowda's response was positive, it avoided mentioning the core is-

Bhutto speaks out

Pakistan's Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto is often portrayed as the Boadicea of the Islamic world. Under her leadership, Pakistan has emerged as a champion of Islamic countries' rights in the international arena. Bhutto, whose government is often accused of corruption, is nevertheless widely acclaimed as the acceptable face of Islam in the West.

Mohamed Abdellah spoke to Bhutto in Islamabad



sue of Jammu and Kashmir.

Subsequently, the atmosphere was vitiated by the Indian government's decision to hold fraudulent State Assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir. These were rejected by the true representatives of the Kashmiri people.

We also want the international community to honour the United Nations resolutions which demand that the people of Jammu and Kashmir be allowed to exercise their right to self-determination. Unless that pledge is fulfilled, peace in this region will remain tenuous.

Efforts are being made to restore Pakistani-Afghan relations. What are the latest developments on this front?

We are in contact with the new interim government in Afghanistan. Pakistan has stressed to the new government the need for restraint and for the maintenance of

conditions allowing the unimpeded flow of humanitarian assistance to the population of Kabul. We have also urged the need for dialogue promoting peace in all areas in Afghanistan.

We hope that the Taliban and General [Abdul-Rashid] Dostum will avoid the path of confrontation and work with each other in the interest of peace and stability in Afghanistan.

What has your government done to bring about economic development in Pakistan and to enhance democracy?

In October 1993 my government inherited an economy which was in a deplorable condition, to say the least. The gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate had plunged to 2.3 per cent in 1992-93. There was fiscal indiscipline, and excessive money was being borrowed and spent. Quality of life indicators had gone

down to deplorable levels. Foreign exchange reserves were heavily depleted and on 21 October 1993 covered less than two weeks' worth of imports.

Immediately after assuming office, we accorded top priority to the economy and its development. The eighth five-year plan was visualised in a totally different way from the past system of controlled planning. We introduced comprehensive structural reforms in every sphere of the economy to improve growth, arrest the trend of decline and achieve macro-economic stability.

The emphasis of our development strategy is on privatisation, deregulation and liberalisation. The government is not intervening in the free market. Simultaneously, we are formulating a regulatory framework to ensure that socio-economic disparities are contained and consumers, small investors and dis-

advantaged groups are protected. The public sector is playing a dominant role in the development of the infrastructure, while a buoyant private sector is being encouraged by liberal and attractive policy packages to play its due role in the economy. Preparatory work for the formulation of the ninth five-year plan has already started.

We have launched a comprehensive social action programme with an estimated investment outlay of \$8 billion — 75 per cent local and 25 per cent foreign resources — to address the key issues of primary education, basic health care, family planning and rural water supply and sanitation. In this programme, we are specifically striving to reach out to rural women, children, disadvantaged groups and the elderly at the grass-roots level. Considerable progress has been achieved in phase one and we are now in phase two. This programme, hopefully, will improve our lagging indicators and help reduce poverty.

As a result of the successful implementation of these reforms, the GDP growth rate rose from 2.3 per cent in 1992-93 to 6.1 per cent in 1995-96. My government has maintained macro-economic stability and controlled inflation by following a very tight monetary policy and strict financial discipline. Substantial progress has been made towards indirect monetary control and market-based instruments of monetary management. The State Bank of Pakistan has been made autonomous. The fiscal deficit, which was as high as eight per cent of GDP in 1992-93, has been brought down to around five per cent of GDP in 1995-96. We expect to bring it down to four per cent in 1996-97.

The agriculture sector has been revived from a negative growth rate of 5.39 per cent in 1992-93 to a positive rate of 6.7 per cent in 1995-96. The cotton crop surpassed the target of 9.5 million bales in 1995-96, producing 10.6 million.

We have adopted a very liberal industrial policy, the main emphasis of which is on privatisation and deregulation. Various attractive incentives have been provided for rapid industrialisation of the country. So far 90 industrial units have been privatised, while 28 more are under consideration.

Capital formation is the prerequisite for economic development of any country. During the last three years we have attracted foreign direct investment of \$3 billion to Pakistan. Foreign investment increased to \$948 million (of which \$743.1 million was direct) in 1995-96 from \$670 million (of which \$442.4 million was direct) in 1994-95. Energy is the most popular field for foreign investors, particularly those from the United States and Britain.

I will now answer the last part of your question. Pakistan is a democratic polity as the country came into being through the free choice of the Muslims of the subcontinent. The dictatorial hianes of our history have had little impact on the political attitudes of our people, which remain deeply democratic. We have made personal sacrifices during our long struggle for the restoration of democratic institutions. Now the country seems very much set on the democratic course and my government is doing its utmost to develop and strengthen institutions. We have associated public representatives in the decision-making process of the country and the implementation of development programmes. We have set up different committees in both houses of parliament which are constantly interacting with the bureaucratic machinery. We have chalked out a programme of holding local elections. We have given greater freedom to the press and we have set up a tradition of better coordination with the independent judiciary.

Afghan turmoil

TROOPS loyal to the powerful Afghan warlord General Abdul Rashid Dostam joined ex-government forces for the first time yesterday to attack a key pass near Kabul held by the ruling Taliban.

The joint assault was made on the strategic Fabz Pass, some 20 kilometres from the Afghan capital Kabul, which controls access to the vital north-south New Road leading to Kabul. The attack, launched early morning with Dostam's men moving in from northern Afghanistan, Dostam controls vast areas of the north inhabited by Turkic ethnic groups such as the Uzbek, Kyrgyz and Turkmen as well as the Pashtun-speaking Tajik.

The anti-Taliban alliance, comprises the forces loyal to former Defence Minister Ahmed Masoud Shah who fled Kabul to the north and Dostam's forces.

Masoud, while maintaining the formal front-line, has been attempting to lure through villages lying away from the road in a bid to close in on the Taliban militia's lines from the rear. The two sides have been battling it out in the area since the strategic Bagram airbase was recaptured from the Taliban by Masoud's forces last Friday.

Pakistan has been trying to broker a ceasefire and Pakistani Interior Minister General Naseerullah Babar predicted that there could be a deal signed within two or three days.

Turkic summit

TURKISH President Suleyman Demirel joined the heads of five former Soviet Turkic-speaking countries this week in the Uzbek capital, Tashkent, to discuss closer ties between Afghanistan and Tajikistan. It was the fourth summit grouping the leaders of Turkey, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

The six countries signed a declaration concerning issues ranging from trade and transport to scientific cooperation. The meeting came amid a surge in tension in Central Asia due to civil wars in Afghanistan and Tajikistan. Uzbek President Islam Karimov said the fighting in neighbouring Afghanistan was not discussed at length at the summit.

The conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over control of the region of Nagorno-Karabakh dominated the talks.

The previous Turkic summit last August in the Kyrgyz capital, Bishkek, was the first to be held in a former Soviet state; the first two meetings were convened in Turkey. The summit provoked concern in Moscow, which is worried by increasing Turkish influence in the Muslim republics along its southern flank. Before leaving for Tashkent, Demirel said last Sunday that improved cooperation between Turkey and the Turkic-speaking former Soviet republics was not harmful to Russia's interests.

Ethnic cleansing in Zaire

THE JUNCTION point of the borders of the Central African nations of Zaire, Rwanda and Burundi has become a battlefield for the control of the entire Great Lakes region of Africa. Nearly 500,000 people have fled the area of fighting and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in the Kenyan capital, Nairobi, put the number of displaced persons at over 100,000. The exodus has sparked an unprecedented humanitarian crisis. For the past week, fighting has been raging between the various ethnic groups that live together in one of the most overpopulated regions of Africa.

The Banyamulenge are ethnic Tutsi who originally from Rwanda, now reside in eastern Zaire. Today, they are fighting the Zairean army in the region of Uvira, in Zaire's Southern Kivu Province, which borders Burundi. The governments of both Rwanda and Burundi are dominated by the mainly Tutsi military establishment. Ethnic Hutu refugees who fled Rwanda and Burundi and took refuge in Zaire resent the Banyamulenge and are trying to remove them from Uvira.

The National Council for the Defence of Democracy (CNDD), the main Burundian Hutu refugee organisation, warned in a statement that "under the cover of Banyamulenge, the war actually pits the armies of Rwanda and Burundi against the armed forces of Zaire."

The governments of Rwanda and Burundi agree with the CNDD statement. They believe that the Zairean authorities are scheming with the CNDD and other Hutu refugees to destabilise Rwanda and Burundi. The Zairean authorities sided with the ousted Hutu-dominated former governments of Rwanda and Burundi against the Tutsi.

Tensions in the region worsened after Rwanda's genocidal civil war of 1994, when Hutu extremists backed by France and Zaire massacred over 500,000 Tutsi and moderate Hutu before the Tutsi-led Rwandan Patriotic Front seized power.

Rights rattle aid recipients

Aid cuts and human rights conditionality take some getting used to when business with dictators burgeons, writes Gamal Nkrumah

Let me play devil's advocate. Is the international obsession with violations of rights in Africa political correctness gone mad? Something about aid cuts and human rights conditionality brings to mind the notion that little in the way of North-South relations has changed — in Africa at any rate. Africa is the most aid-dependent continent. The continent is, by implication, also the most susceptible to donor nations' determination to bring human rights issues to the aid debate. Donor nations have used human rights conditionality to appease self-righteous public opinion in the North. Non-governmental organisations and not governments in the South have become the main recipients of aid from the North. There has been an attempt to bypass Southern governments altogether. But Southern governments cannot be circumvented. As if to underscore their intransigence, they have learnt to do without aid altogether.

Nigeria is a case in point. "Nigeria has stopped receiving aid for the past two years," Nigeria's charge d'affaires in Cairo, Patrick Erombor, told *Al-Ahram Weekly*. "We are no longer dependent on the donor's charity. Yet if there is one thing even the critics and detractors of the [Sani Abacha] regime agree upon, it is that the Nigerian economy is on the mend. We do not accept people who come to Nigeria to nose about in our own domestic concerns." But some visitors are welcomed in Nigeria. African-American Senator Caroline Mosely-Braun went on an inspection tour of Nigeria to ascertain human rights abuses there. She returned to Washington singing the praises of the Abacha regime.

American development aid to Africa stands at a paltry \$700 million annually. Yet American officials often speak with the air of people who think they hold the fate of the world in their hands. America's bumbling ineptitude in Somalia, Vietnam and elsewhere in the international arena notwithstanding, many in the West are obsessed with ways of ensuring that aid to poor countries is better targeted. Some people feel that all anti-poverty programmes are pointless. "Throwing money down a rat-hole," sneered US Republican Senator Jesse Helms recently when giving his opinion on them.

Western multinationals are working away like nobody's business in Nigeria, while Western aid agencies brandish the human rights conditionality factor in their dealings with the country. Western funds channelled to Nigerian non-governmental organisations such as the Civil Liberties Organisation, which has undertaken detailed studies of

prison conditions and police abuses in Nigeria, are invaluable. Other Nigerian NGOs like the Constitutional Rights Project, the Committee for the Defence of Human Rights, Human Rights Africa, the National Association for Democratic Lawyers and the Legal Research and Development Centre, which propagates human rights education, all receive generous Western donations. There is little Nigeria's strongman, General Sani Abacha, can do about Western help to Nigerian NGOs.

It was African Human Rights Day on Sunday 20 October and some spirited Abacha-bashing was in the offing. As it turned out, news of transnational corporations raising their stakes in the Nigerian economy filtered in instead. The Anglo-Dutch oil giant, Shell, is investing some \$3.6 billion in a liquefied natural gas project in the country. Western airlines cannot afford to stop flying to Nigeria's international airports: British Airways makes some \$500 million a week from its flights to Nigeria. Household names such as Unilever and Nestlé are doing brisk business in Nigeria — Africa's second largest market after South Africa. Heineken and Guinness, too, are merry with the profits they are making in Africa's most populous nation. Nigerians love their lager and stout; the 120 million-strong West African nation is the third largest market for the British-based Guinness group. America's Citibank is raising its shares in the Nigeria International Bank from 40 to 75 per cent, creating a brand new foreign financial services subsidiary in Nigeria — Citibank Nigeria.

In all, it seems clear that the West's uncertainty about doing business with Nigeria is a charade. Official Nigerian statistics show that portfolio investors have pumped some \$5 billion into the Nigerian economy in the first six months of 1996. The funds represent a 77 per cent increase on similar investments in the second half of last year. Nigeria's military regime has removed controls on foreign investment and Western multinationals are moving in to consolidate their control on their Nigerian operations. Five teams of top World Bank officials visited Nigeria this year. They met Nigeria's finance minister, Chief Anthony Ani, and the privatisation of government-owned parastatals topped the discussions.

The Zamalek-based African Society hosted an event to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the Organisation of African Unity's (OAU) African Charter on Human and People's Rights. The welcome speech was delivered by Ambassador Mo-

hamed Fuad El-Bedewi, the president of the society. Next spoke Ambassador Magdi Hefui, assistant minister for African affairs, who is off to Ouagadougou, capital of Burkina Faso, next week to represent Egypt at a meeting of the Washington-based Global Coalition for Africa — a brainchild of African-American civil rights leader Reverend Jesse Jackson. Professor Mufid Shehah, the president of Cairo University and president of the Egyptian Human Rights Association, who gave the keynote speech at the Zamalek function, told the *Weekly*: "Cultural differences and varying levels of development must be taken into account when comparing different perceptions of human rights."

Ambassador Naila Gabr, head of the Human Rights Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, also spoke to the *Weekly*. "Egypt objects to linking human rights issues with Western aid," she said. During Foreign Minister Amr Moussa's visit to Nigeria on 29-31 August, Nigeria confirmed that it supported the OAU's backing of the candidacy of United Nations Secretary-General Boutros Ghali for a second term. Gabr said that African countries should work closely together to ease tensions arising from differing perceptions of human rights in the international arena. "In Africa, we must raise the consciousness of human rights and educate the public about human rights issues," she said. But do African governments respect the conventions they ratified? The Nigerian military regime dissolved striking trade unions in 1994 and detained the unions' leaders.

The French press defence group, Reporters Sans Frontières, said this week that four Nigerian journalists have been imprisoned this year, but admitted that this compares favourably to four imprisoned in Rwanda — a country with 20 times fewer people than Nigeria — and Ethiopia, where 10 journalists languish in jail. "The print media is relatively free in Nigeria and a quick glance at Nigerian dailies and weeklies will show that relative freedom is not restricted to the printed word," Nigerian charge d'affaires Erombor said. The legal restrictions on the worship of traditional African deities enforced in colonial times have been lifted. But radio and television are strictly controlled. Journalists imprisoned, opposition literature confiscated and media houses closed. Fake copies of outspoken newspapers circulate freely.

Erombor bails from one of the smaller of Nigeria's 450 ethnic groups, but dismissed the late activist Ken Saro-Wiwa's thwarted efforts to en-

sure the rights of Ogonis and other minority groups. "The National Electoral Commission of Nigeria recently approved the registration of five political parties," said the Nigerian charge d'affaires. He added that 15 political groups had applied for official registration, but the number was whittled down according to the commission's guidelines on the national outlook and geographical spread of the new parties.

Even though it is the fourth largest OPEC oil producer, Nigeria's per capita income has plummeted from \$1,000 in 1980 to some \$300 today. Nigeria's minister for works and housing, General Abdul-Karim Adisa, disclosed that Nigeria needs over 12 million new houses. Some 3,270 houses have so far been built out of the 121,000 promised by General Abacha's administration when it came to power. China's state-owned China Civil Engineering Construction company has stepped in to salvage Nigeria's national housing programme. Accommodation shortage is rampant in urban areas. Slum dwellers are subject to the periodic demolition of their shacks. In July 1990, over 300,000 residents of the shanty town of Makoko near Lagos were rendered homeless when bulldozers razed their homes under the pretext that they were illegal squatters.

On the other hand, the trickle of aid to Africa is now being geared to economic liberalisation and privatisation programmes and not to project support. Recipient nations in the South are at a loss as to what to do. This has had serious repercussions on donor-recipient relations. There are those who believe aid is a spent force. "Foreign aid," declared development guru Depak Lal recently in a publication of the prestigious London-based Institute of Economic Affairs, "is an idea whose time has gone." The baby of defending human rights will be thrown away with the bath water of aid.

Coca-cola Receives Packaging Award



ON THE TWENTY FOURTH OF SEPTEMBER 1996, DOUGLAS WESTER, GENERAL MANAGER OF COCA COLA CO. IN CAIRO, PRESENTED THE QUALITY AWARD TO THE COMPANY. HE INDICATED THAT THE COCA COLA EGYPT IS COMMITTED TO THE HIGHEST QUALITY; THE AWARD IS THE FRUIT OF THIS DEVOTION. MIKE CROWL RECEIVED THE AWARD FROM MR. WESTER AT A RECEPTION PARTY HELD ABOARD THE NILE CRUISE SCARABEE.

ATTENDING THE PARTY WERE A GROUP OF COCA COLA REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE UNITED STATES AND THE MIDDLE EAST. SOME COCA COLA EGYPT EMPLOYEES ALSO ATTENDED THE PARTY. MR. WESTER JOINED COCA COLA IN 1979 AS ASSISTANT MANAGER AND WORKED HIS WAY UP THE CORPORATE LADDER UNTIL JULY 1994 WHEN HE BECAME PRESIDENT OF COCA COLA INTERNATIONAL. COCA COLA IS THE NUMBER ONE COMPANY AMONG CARBONATED BEVERAGE COMPANIES. IT HAS 58% SHARE OF THE MARKET.

As American as apple pie

On the eve of the American presidential elections, a poll reveals that Arab Americans have integrated into mainstream America, writes **Mohamed Wahby** from Washington.

With more than a million votes, Arab Americans have been searching for a role in the presidential and state elections which will take place in under two weeks. Their agenda, however, is not confined to the problems of their ancestral homes. This is helpful to them, as naturalised Americans, as well as to us in the Arab world. By becoming part of the political mainstream of their adopted country, their stand on issues of common concern becomes more credible and effective.

A significant step was taken last week to assess the role of Arab Americans, who constitute one of the fastest growing ethnic communities in the country. In cooperation with the Middle East Broadcasting Centre and the Arab-American Institute, the John Zogby Group International conducted the first ever nationwide poll of Arab-American voters. The poll highlighted the important role they can play in national and state elections since they are concentrated in several key states and metropolitan areas, mainly in the crucial battleground in the American Mid-West.

Now, who are the Arab Americans as a voting group? According to the poll, about a third of them live in the east of the United States, while 27 per cent live in the central Great Lakes region — which will play a decisive role in the battle between President Bill Clinton and his Republican opponent, Bob Dole. One in five lives in the west and about the same proportion lives in the south. About 45 per cent of Arab-American voters are US-born; the rest are immigrants. A little less than half of them are of Lebanese descent, followed by Palestinians with 13 per cent, Syrians with 11 per cent, Egyptians with nine per cent and Jordanians and Iraqis with three to four per cent each. The rest identified themselves variously as Arab, Arabian, mixed or simply Americans.

The poll discovered that US-born Arab Americans maintain as close ties with the Arab world as those of more recent immigrants. It revealed that 61 per cent of all Arab Americans follow news about the Arab world "very closely", and 31 per cent "somewhat closely". When asked how significant a candidate's stand on the Middle East is to their votes, nine out of 10 indicated that it is "very important".

Arab Americans were found to favour the Republican Party (42 per cent) over the Democrats (36.5 per cent), while 21.4 per cent are registered as independents or in third parties or in no party. However, 43.4 per cent said they preferred President Clinton against 29.6 per cent who said they would vote for Dole. Seventeen per cent were undecided. 65 per cent favoured Ross Perot, the Reform Party candidate, and 3.4 per cent chose Ralph Nader, the Green Party candidate who is of Arab descent. The poll was found to be leading Dole by almost the same percentage in the national polls conducted last week, a fact which shows that Arab Americans fit part of the American mainstream. Clinton's

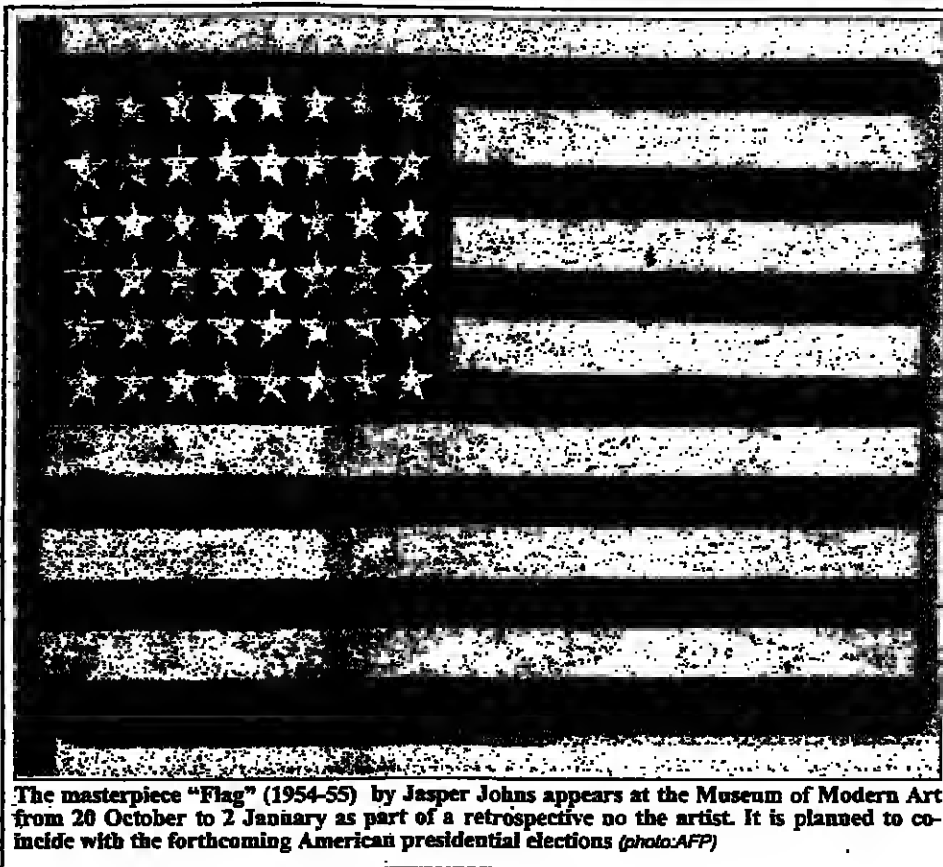
ad over Dole was strongest among those not born in the US (45 per cent to 22.5 per cent). Eighty-one per cent of Arab Americans support the establishment of an independent Palestine and 85 per cent believe Israel has a right to exist. Surprisingly, however, foreign policy issues at the bottom of those issues which they regard as being most important in the coming elections, while education comes at the top, followed by crime, drugs, health care, the budget deficit, taxes and character. Their priorities are those as the rest of Americans.

The poll has drawn the attention of the two main political parties and made the community more aware of its strength as a political force. Arab Americans have gone a long way in making the presence felt. When I first came to the US in 1987 it was inconceivable that Arab Americans would be invited to meet with the president to discuss issues of particular concern to them. Now such meetings hardly surprise anyone. President Clinton now invariably mentions Muslims when he mentions Christians and Jews and his wife invited women representatives of Arab-American and Muslim organisations last Ramadan to the White House and shared dinner with them. Furthermore, Clinton now issues congratulatory messages to American Muslims on the main Muslim holidays. It is thanks to Arab Americans that Islam is being increasingly recognised as the highest level of the administration. But such recognition has not yet filtered down to many other levels.

Arab Americans can now mobilise quickly whenever a situation in the Middle East requires any action. When the Palestinians last month protested Israel's opening of a tunnel near Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, they reacted immediately by contacting the State Department and some members of the Congress. They issued statements condemning "the unilateral Israeli action to change the character of the city" and criticising "the timid and subdued reaction of the Clinton administration to the intolerable Israeli excesses". In a direct appeal to President Clinton, Khalil Jahshan, the director of the National Association of Arab Americans, said, "The Out to Lunch — Back on November 6, sign the White House must come down!"

On 27 September the Arab-American organisations formed a coalition with Muslim and Christian organisations in Washington and held a joint press conference after which they led two demonstrations, one at the White House and the other in front of the Israeli embassy. The administration took notice of this instant reaction of the community and soon afterwards their representatives were called to the White House. But the demonstrations continued during the summit which was called by Clinton and attended by Palestinian President Yasser Arafat, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Jordan King Hussein.

Arab-American organisations are recent arrivals on the American arena. The first emerged



The masterpiece "Flag" (1954-55) by Jasper Johns appears at the Museum of Modern Art from 20 October to 2 January as part of a retrospective of the artist. It is planned to coincide with the forthcoming American presidential elections (photo:AFP)

only in 1967. As a result of the war of that year, a group of Arab intellectuals set up the organisation of Arab-American University Graduates (AAUG) to counter the propagandist activities of Jewish organisations. The AAUG, which was registered as an educational organisation, provided basic information, mainly to academic institutions.

In 1972 a more politicised group met in Washington and established the National Association of Arab Americans (NAAA). Unlike the AAUG, the NAAA can lobby to make US policy in the Middle East more sensitive to Arab concerns.

Arab Americans became more visible and this caused more resistance and discrimination against them. The need to fight this discrimination led former Senator James Abourezk to establish in 1980 the Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC). In 1985 James Zogby set up the Arab-American Institute (AAI) to get the community involved in the electoral process. Though not exactly by design, each Arab-American organisation devotes its activities to a different but complementary field. With dozens of Egyptian, Palestinian and Lebanese organisations mushrooming in the meantime, the need was felt for coordinating work among these sub-organisations and the national ones. This led to the emergence of the Council of Presidents of Arab-American Organisations, which meets every month under a chairmanship which rotates among the main organisations — the ADC, the NAAA and the AAUG. Conspicuously absent, however, is AAI President James Zogby.

ADC President Hala Maksoud politely explains this absence by saying that it was Zogby, when he was still with the ADC, who insisted on including a rule in the statutes of the council that confines its membership to member organisations, of which the AAI is not one. NAAA President Khalil Jahshan, currently the chairman of the council, says that the AAI participates in the council's meetings, but Zogby is not satisfied with the observer status of the AAI and, therefore, "halfheartedly" sends one of his subordinates in his place.

But from what I have observed over the years, I believe the problem is rather more serious. On many important political occasions, the AAI called for "summits of Arab-American leaders", but the leaders of the other three national organisations were conspicuous by their absence. On the same occasions, these organisations would hold special meetings, too, but Zogby would always be missing. Despite the fact that each national organisation is doing valuable work in its own field, one would have liked to see united action on certain occasions, such as the latest uprising in Gaza and the West Bank. Each side blames the other, though, mercifully, not publicly.

One hears whispers among some members of the AAI that the leaders of the other national organisations are acting outside the American political mainstream, or even that they are more Arab than Americans. Hints can be heard, especially during the last four years of Clinton's administration, that other leaders are envious because Zogby, being a Democrat, has been enjoying unprecedented access to those who wield real power in Washington.

Complaints are voiced, however, that although Zogby is a talented and creative person who knows the political situation and how to use it very well, he is fond of controlling everything and of acting alone, leaving, if not losing, the community behind him. One Arab-American leader once told Zogby jokingly that the way he was acting might have been excusable had he been born in the Arab world. Zogby quickly replied, "Well, it is in the genes!" Some also say that Zogby has been overcompensating for the 12 years of Republican rule under Ronald Reagan and George Bush, during which he, as "a political animal", languished.

Khalil Jahshan usually plays down the differences among Arab-American organisations and says what matters is that they are all contributing to the Arab-American community. But he says that when leaders from Arab countries ask him, "Why don't you guys unite?" he replies by asking them, "Is it because you have failed to achieve unity in the Arab world that you want us to do it for you?"

A Clinton landslide?

President Clinton's current 10-point lead over Dole could transform itself into a landslide victory on election day. **James Zogby** explains how

Gloom has once again descended on the Republican Party and the Dole campaign has begun to act in desperation. After two weeks of press leaks suggesting that Dole had decided to raise the issue of Bill Clinton's character, Dole unloaded a bitter attack on the Clinton White House.

In a series of speeches, Dole, his running mate, Jack Kemp, and other campaign supporters pointed to mistakes and scandals that have plagued the president and members of his administration for the past four years. While these attacks are music to the ears of the Republican faithful, they have not yet borne fruit for the Dole campaign for four principal reasons.

First, one of the scandals directly involves the president in any wrongdoing. Second, most of these matters have been the subject of years of investigation and long, drawn-out Congressional hearings. In most cases the public has decided that by raising them again, the Republicans are just "playing politics".

Third, by going on the attack, Senator Dole risks losing as much as he might gain. Voters already feel that Dole is too mean and too negative. By directly and repeatedly going after the president, Dole is in danger of reinforcing this negative image of his campaign.

Finally, most voters have already decided how they will vote and seem to be basing their choice on specific issues and their concerns about the direction of the country. In this regard it is interesting to note that while voters give Dole a higher rating for integrity and character than Clinton, they give the president higher points for leadership on the issues that mean the most to them — education, the economy, health care, environmental concerns and fighting crime.

As a result, the president has maintained a greater than 10 per cent lead for weeks now and that level has at times increased to over 15 per cent.

What is most troubling to the Dole camp is that the president is not only leading Dole in national polls, but in important states where Republicans have traditionally been victorious. And it is these state-by-state counts that will ultimately be decisive in determining the outcome of the election.

To understand presidential politics in the United States, it is necessary to understand the inner workings of what is called the electoral system. According to the US constitution, presidential elections are not, in fact, decided by the national popular vote — but by what is called the electoral vote.

Each of the 50 states is assigned a specific number of electoral votes, or electors. States are given as many electors as their combined number of congressmen and senators. Every state has two senators, but the number of congressmen is determined by the state's population.

Thus, California, the most populous state, which has 52 congressmen and two senators, is assigned a total of 54 electoral votes. Vermont, with a far smaller population, has only three electoral votes.

The winner of each state receives all of its electoral votes. There are a total of 538 electoral votes: 435 congressmen, 100 senators and three electoral votes for the nation's capital, Washington DC. In order to win the election, a presidential candidate must win enough states to win at least 270 electoral votes — half of the total plus one.

This complex system has produced presidential campaigns which are run out as national efforts, but as individual state campaigns. The themes and programmes put forward by the candidate are national in scope, but the tactics of each campaign are focused on a local basis.

From 1968 to 1988 the Republicans had what was considered a "lock" on the electoral vote. Because their message and programmes appealed to so many diverse constituencies and regions of the country, Republicans were virtually guaranteed victory in 21 states with a total of 191 electoral votes. They won these states in all six elections between 1968 and 1988. In five of those six elections, they also won another 12 states with a combined total of 135 electoral votes.

The Democrats, on the other hand, only won Washington DC all six times.

As a result of their regularly winning these states, even if only by a small margin, Republicans were virtually guaranteed victories by what appeared to be large margins in the electoral vote.

In 1968 for example, Republican Richard Nixon beat Democrat Hubert Humphrey by a mere one per cent of the popular vote, or only 500,000 votes nationally. Nixon's real victory came in the electoral vote where he won enough states to win by a margin of 301-191. That year, a southern governor named George Wallace ran as an independent and won 46 electoral votes by winning a number of southern states.

Similarly, while Ronald Reagan is remembered for his landslide victory over Jimmy Carter in 1980, he in fact won by only nine per cent of the popular vote. The landslide came in the electoral vote count, which Reagan won by 489 to 49.

Even George Bush's 1988 victory over Michael Dukakis was less than nine per cent nationally, but he won enough states to give him a 426-to-111 margin in electoral votes.

As a result of this Republican lock on almost all of the western states (including California), the industrial Mid-Western states (especially Illinois, Indiana, Michigan and Ohio) and most of the southern states (when a southerner like Carter or Wallace was not in the race), Democrats were at a real disadvantage when running national campaigns.

With Republicans all but guaranteed victory in so many states, Democrats had to win all the rest plus a few of the so-called Republican states just to be competitive.

In 1992 Democrats, led by Bill Clinton, broke that electoral lock. By developing a centrist message that focused on economic issues, Clinton was able to assemble a coalition that won the support of young and middle-class voters, including those who live in states that Republicans had previously claimed as their own. Clinton, for example, won California with 54 electoral votes and Illinois with 22. Republicans had won these states in the past six elections.

In 1996 Clinton promises to surpass his 1992 victory. Not only is he leading in California and Illinois; he is also leading Dole in such Republican strongholds as Arizona (eight electoral votes) and Florida (25).

The latest state polls show Clinton having a commanding lead in 25 states with 307 electoral votes. Dole, on the other hand, has a substantial lead in only nine states with 44 electoral votes. Overall, Clinton is ahead in 35 states with 412 electoral votes, while Dole is leading in 14 states with 110 votes.

With a bleak picture before them, Dole's campaign strategists are increasingly hard pressed to decide in which states they should campaign to win the necessary 270 electoral votes.

One major US newspaper described the Dole strategy as attempting to "thread the needle". With only two weeks to go and limited campaign funds left, Dole has had to decide to pool all of his resources into about a dozen states — including California, Florida, Virginia and Texas — where he is running neck and neck with the president and to ignore the rest of the country.

Since the Dole campaign will not actually compete in several states, the Clinton campaign can turn its attention to a few key states of their own and to helping Democrat candidates in elections for the Senate and House of Representatives.

The president wants not only to win in November, but to see his Democratic Party return to control in Congress. Winning back control of the Senate may be difficult, but regaining the House of Representatives appears to be within the realm of possibility.

This has been a dramatic turn of events for the Democrats. In 1994, when the Republicans shocked the nation and seized control of Congress, most analysts gave Clinton up for dead. With his polling figures at an all-time low and with an aggressive new Republican leadership in charge in Washington, it was assumed that Clinton would lose in 1996 and Republicans would control all branches of government.

A combination of Republican mistakes and an effective White House political campaign have proven that prediction quite wrong.

Republicans will continue to campaign aggressively and hope that their attack tactics and their "eye of the oedipal" electoral strategy works. But barring a miracle, President Clinton appears to be heading for victory with popularity enough to help his party regain at least some of its former strength.

The writer is president of the Washington-based Arab American Institute.

Edited by Gamal Nkrumah

The first lady factor

With less than two weeks to go before the American presidential elections, hair-spray and haute couture abound as Hillary Clinton and Elizabeth Dole take their husbands' sides, strutting their stuff in the public eye to promote their parties' electoral messages. **Alan Alans** examines the first lady factor. **Arthur Murray**, lecturer at the American University in Cairo (AUC), insists: "Voters don't make their choice on the basis of the first ladies, but on issues and on the president." All the same, the two women have attained undeniable prominence in their husbands' tightly scripted campaigns. What, then, is their role and are they an asset or a liability in the race to the White House?

Ja a political race where little is left to chance, this is an interesting question. Both Hillary Clinton and Elizabeth Dole are strong-willed and professional women. Both have broken the traditional Nancy Reagan mould of the conventional, self-effacing political wife in important, though very different ways. This has led many to the conclusion that their function is primarily to be a link between their husbands and women voters. With President Bill Clinton leading Bob Dole in popularity among women voters, both the Democratic and Republican camps are heavily targeting women in the be-

lieve that elections may be won on the female vote. But seeing Mrs Clinton and Mrs Dole, in Murray's words, "as a psychological bridge of acceptance to the female vote" is to exaggerate the actual part they play. If indeed, as Murray says, "people make their choice on trust, sincerity and on an unspoken feeling of empathy," the importance of the presidential candidates' wives lies more in the contribution they make in portraying an environment in which their husbands act — painting a trustworthy portrait, in the eyes of the voters, of the man behind the policies.

Women voters will be crucial on 5 November. According to Deane Ford, professor of management at the AUC, many of the issues on which Clinton and Dole disagree are important to women, anyone being targeted at a female audience. These include issues ranging from the regulation of tobacco and assault weapons to family leave and federal crime legislation, all of which have been found to appeal to mothers and form a staple of Clinton's campaign. Ford explained: "As a woman of the baby-boom generation, I am concerned about ageing parents; the Medicare available to them. I am also concerned about my children, or grandchildren, the education they receive. As the kind of world we leave them." Like their husbands, women

will be "voting on the issues, not on the president's wife," she said.

But if Mrs Clinton and Mrs Dole are unlikely to swing the female vote, how successfully do they play the more general role of shaping public perception of their husbands' character? Here, Hillary could prove a liability. A highly controversial first lady, public response to her varies across a wide spectrum, from those who see her as the latest victim of America's misogynistic hatred of talented women to those who, convinced of her megalomaniacal tendencies, cast her as a modern-day Lady Macbeth, pulling the political strings behind the scenes at the White House. Scandals, including Whitewater and the case of the missing FBI files, have done little to abate this controversy.

According to Curtis Mills, lecturer in international relations at the AUC, the prominent political role which Hillary sought to play in the early stages of her husband's administration, and which culminated in the collapse of her health care reforms, encroached on what was seen as the president's domain and unleashed a highly negative public response.

Though Hillary-bashing in the media has cast doubt on the Clintons' campaign messages of reliability and moral integrity, the first lady may not

be the electoral liability she appears. For starters, most voters — male or female — have come to differentiate between the actions of the president and those of his wife. More significantly, Hillary Clinton commands a strong following among the more liberal wing of the Democratic Party, and so adds to her husband's ticket. The last two years have forced the Clinton administration more towards the centre and disgruntled the liberal wing, which disapproves of actions such as the president's signing of the recent health care legislation. Hillary remains a link to such liberal support.

Elizabeth Dole is, at first glance, much closer to the approved stereotype of a first lady than Hillary. At second glance she is not a graduate of Harvard Law School, she has held office in two administrations and is currently on leave from her post as head of the American Red Cross. She has created a public persona for herself in which her very considerable achievements never intrude into Dole's arena of action. According to AUC lecturer Murray, "She is very much more the image of the supportive wife, in keeping with the image of the Republican help-mate. She does not have a prominent independent image like Hillary."

As such, Mrs Dole enhances her husband's more conservative message of

a return to the "old values" in important ways. Murray explained: "Elizabeth Dole can build a rapport with voters and campaign strongly in key Republican areas... She does not have a political following like Hillary, but when she goes out on her own she is representing her husband in the closest, most intimate political sense." At the Republican Party convention she created for herself and her husband a picture of bravery and integrity, implicitly challenging the dubious incidents in which the Clintons have been embroiled.

As Clinton's comfortable lead over Dole in the polls narrows this week, party aides will play on every asset they can mobilise in their candidates' favour. As Murray explained, "The president is the sum total of people bridging to him." The wives cannot swing the outcome of the elections, but they do play a part in creating the persona of the presidential candidate, each in turn making her husband more appealing to voters by introducing "the man behind the policies" — the family man, the devoted husband. They thereby bring politics into the home and provide the messages of sympathy to complement the hard political rhetoric of their husbands' campaign messages. Beyond that, unfortunately, their function is minimal.



Close up

Salama A. Salama

Control on-line

As the information revolution enters a new era the security, surveillance and judicial authorities throughout the Arab world have been on red alert. Throughout 1995 they were busy searching for ways to control and censor fax messages and data nets and to control the programmes spewed out by satellite channels. Meanwhile the advanced world was facing other problems as they sought to improve and streamline the flow of data along the "information highway" by the use of worldwide computer nets. Their concerns were far removed from restricting access to information, or distorting the presentation of that information. Rather they concentrated on facilitating its free flow.

But in the Arab world we continue to consider the possession of information as the prerogative of the ruling elite. It is this elite that reserves for itself the right to decide what is good and what is bad, to decide what is in the public interest and what is not. In progressive countries the acquisition of information is seen as a right to be enjoyed by all. It is up to the individual to distinguish between what is suitable and what is not and legal proceedings are only invoked in the event of information that might be seriously detrimental to society.

Last year several Arab states spent a great deal of energy on attempts to curb the spread of parabolic antennas — dishes — and limit the reception of TV programmes deemed incompatible with religious beliefs, customs or traditions. Furthermore the access of individuals or groups to specific data bases is severely limited, even in universities and research institutes.

Can we, then, express even a modicum of surprise that intellectual life in the Arab world is as claustrophobic, as narrow and as stifling as it is? Or that those who see themselves up as the guardians of our religious values and moral well-being should use the powers they have accrued to silence any dissent, to terrorise intellectuals and confine any creative endeavour within the narrowest of limits?

They proscribe books and films under the cover of Islam. They bring lawsuits with the aim of limiting freedom of expression. Constantly they claim to be protecting Islam against forces intent on its subversion and in the course of this defence file an ever growing number of lawsuits. In some cases the verdicts are for the defendants, in others they are condemned to prison terms. Publications are seized, charges of apostasy upheld, and husbands separated from wives.

The gaining impetus of those forces opposed to enlightenment and to freedom gives us all cause to worry. Whether the strength of this trend is a result of blind prejudice and bigotry, or of ignorance, or whether it is underwritten by the apprehension of the authorities and the lack of trust they place in their own populations is neither here nor there. The fact is that those opposed to advancement appear to be gaining rather than losing ground.

Gomaa?



Looking beneath the carpet

The sudden rush on the part of a number of Egyptian intellectuals to promote dialogue with Netanyahu's opponents within Israel is neither a new phenomenon nor, under present circumstances, one particularly conducive to peace, writes **Gamil Mattar**

The last two months have seen several developments that bear a striking similarity to events of the 1970s. Then the US was exerting tremendous pressure on Egypt to receive delegations of American Zionists. The idea, ostensibly, was for Egypt's intellectuals and writers to meet with American Jews and engage in dialogue with them in order to recognise their humanity, and — presumably — to conclude that Zionism was not quite as evil as Arab ultra-nationalists portrayed it to be. Scenarios were told that such meetings would be of help to the US administration in exerting pressure on Israel to adjust its policies towards Egypt and the Arabs.

Since the election of Netanyahu the same scenario is repeating itself and hardly a week goes by without the arrival in Cairo of yet another delegation of extremist Zionists. They come, state their extremist positions, and then return to the US without having adjusted a single notion. I know of no case in which a member of one of these delegations has altered his position or suggested concessions that the Israeli government should offer.

The standard practice at these meetings is for the Egyptian or Arab participants to bend over backwards to prove their moderate credentials while the Jewish guests take every opportunity to present themselves as firm Zionists, intractable in conceding "Jewish rights".

I have no doubt that the majority of Egyptian and Arab participants in these meetings are well meaning, nor do I entertain any suspicions concerning their motives. They all share the same basic belief — that they participate in these dialogues as a way to influence the thinking of their Zionist counterparts. There is nothing to fear, they argue, since we enter into these discussions confident of our choice of peace and of Arab rights.

This, at least, is how the argument used to go. Lately though, and particularly among new adherents to the current round of "dialogue", the argument has developed into something like this: "We have to penetrate Israeli society through dialogue in order to save the peace process for which we have paid dearly, in blood in the October War. The Israelis are divided, as proven by the last elections, and the Israeli peace camp, which is the left, which is the Labour Party, is on the defensive. Egyptian intellectuals are duty-bound to forge ahead, courageously breaking the siege around the Israeli left and joining hands with it to counterbalance the Israeli right-wing, which does not hide its hostility to peace."

This new argument, put forward by an increasing number of Egyptian intellectuals, has, in my view, gone well beyond the realm of creative thinking on Arab-Israeli peace; it only because much of what is being proposed lies outside the field of cultural, academic or media activity. It impinges on, indeed comes to constitute, direct political action and while this transition is not alarming in and of itself it raises a number of important questions.

Significantly, those propounding this argument come from across the political spectrum. Their ideological frames of reference are far from similar, and the campaign includes intellectuals belonging to the far right and others from the left. Moreover, financial and commercial forces appear to be playing an increasing role in the campaign, whether through support and encouragement or direct organisation, mobilisation and recruitment.

There are those who believe that the aim of the campaign is largely domestic and in reality has little to do with influencing Israeli public opinion. The real aim of the campaign, they argue, is to coax the Egyptian political leadership from its pan-Arabist and nationalistic stance into positions less aligned to the Palestinians and the Syrians and less challenging to the Israelis and the Americans. Fueling the campaign, they suggest, lies the conviction among certain groups that the nationalist political discourse hampers the prospects for Egyptian capitalism, triggering increasing concern in Israel and inciting Egyptian and Arab public opinion. The latter, these vested interests warn, may trigger an uncontrollable "chain reaction" and a descent into chaos.

It has also been suggested, in justification of this campaign, that Egypt should have taken more care in its confrontation with Netanyahu not to fuel the fears of the Israeli people. They argue that since we have opted for the peace process, it is our duty to reassure the Israeli people, eliminating the reasons that lie behind their fears, going back to the October War in 1973 and sometimes a couple of millennia more. Moreover, we should not, they argue, give the Israelis new grounds for fear. I have heard leaders of this campaign bitterly complain that certain recent Egyptian statements and actions, such as the Badr military manoeuvres, have deeply fractured the Israelis' sense of security, a fracture that can be healed only through an intensive campaign conducted by businessmen, thinkers, writers, the leaders of non-governmental groups, trade unions and university professors.

There are also those who say that the Arab summit held in Cairo after Netanyahu's election was a mistake. They argue that by meeting so swiftly Arab leaders helped promote Netanyahu's popularity inside Israel and in the US, bringing to his camp people from the left and from among the supporters of peace.

We should exert every effort, they argue, to convince the Israeli people that Egyptians are in favour of normalisation of relations and realise that without speedy normalisation there can be no peace, regardless of what the negotiators commit to paper.

Such arguments are invariably compounded by the assertion that in Egypt there exist those with a profound animosity to the very concept of peace. Their position, it is argued, received a boost with the holding of the Arab summit, and has been reinforced by the fact that the political leadership, represented by the president and his foreign policy administration, appears united with Egyptian public opinion in its positions towards Israel.

American and Israeli officials have been quick to criticise what appears to be perceived as a new orientation in Egyptian policy. Individuals who criticise Israeli arrogance and intransigence, or who defend Arab rights in Palestine, Syria and Lebanon are repeatedly and indiscriminately denounced as enemies of peace, a charge that is even hurled at those individuals who have the temerity to question the excessive and incomprehensible urge to normalise relations before reaching a reasonable, if not a real, peace.

The most serious of the whispering campaigns being conducted by the new normalisers, and the most significant, is their suggestion that "enemies of peace" in Egypt are conspiring to restore dictatorship to the country. But peace, they whisper, can only be realised in a climate of democracy, pluralism and freedom of expression. Dictatorship, they insinuate, leads only to war. One can only surmise that behind such naive insinuations lies an attempt to provide some form of credibility for Netanyahu's insistence, before the US Congress, that democratic Israel could in no way be held responsible for triggering wars in the region. Rather, he was happy to suggest, such responsibility lies squarely at the door of Arab dictators.

Not surprisingly, this kind of thinking is popular in the West, which has a vested interest in rewriting its own history of colonialist plunder and imperialist wars and devastation. The strategy followed by the advocates of this normalisation involves an attempt to mobilise liberal forces in Egypt behind normalisation — in its new sense — while trying to frighten away the political leadership from the discourse of pan-Arabism and nationalism.

To oppose this fabricated and intensive campaign does not imply, however, an opposition to dialogue with Jewish writers and intellectuals. I would be happy to support such a dialogue should it serve to bolster the prospects for that real and lasting peace for which all people of good will, Arabs and Israelis alike, fervently wish. I would hope, however, that the desire for such a dialogue be expressed in conjunction with a list of the conditions necessary for a climate of good will.

Among such conditions I would include the following: that Israeli supporters of peace, headed by the Israeli left, apologise for all the crimes committed by successive Labour governments, or coalition governments including Labour. Such crimes, which have fuelled the conflict between the Israeli and Palestinian peoples, include the breaking of the bones of Intifada children, the continuing expansion of settlements on Palestinian lands even while the peace negotiations were taking place, and the Judaisation of Jerusalem, despite the Israeli government committing itself in the Oslo Agreement, to refrain from attempts to change the status quo of the city in a way that might affect final status negotiations.

I belong to a generation that, while younger than the Jewish generation of the holocaust, shares its refusal to forget. That older generation is not ready to forget the holocaust and Nazi atrocities, while my generation cannot forget the Sinai massacres, the extermination of Egyptian soldiers under the protection of French and British planes, and the hatching of Egyptian children during the War of Attrition. No one can tell the holocaust generation to forget what took place. No one

Soapbox

Union of silence

This year's trade union elections are passing virtually unnoticed, a far cry from the debate and controversy that used to characterise such events.

This strange silence has several causes. There are now fewer trade union committees holding elections — 1,650 units as opposed to 2,300 in the mid '80s. In new units they have encountered legal difficulties following the implementation of the investment law and existing union structures have been weakened by the privatisation process. In the Tenth of Ramadan City, the largest of the new industrial cities, there are 117 factories but only seven trade union committees where elections are taking place.

Recent amendments to the law have increased the number of workers necessary for the formation of a union from 50 in any given unit to 250. Few of the new, capital intensive factories are likely to employ enough workers to meet this new quorum.

The trade union movement is also being steadily deprived of experienced members. In one public sector engineering company every single worker aged between 50 and 60 has applied for early retirement. Many agricultural unions, too, have ceased to operate, largely due to the fact that they were of increasingly little relevance to rural agricultural workers.

Yet across the board trade union activities appear to be of decreasing relevance to their members — the free economy has become a reality and in the transition the role of trade unions has been restricted to discussing retirement benefits and other day to day matters, whereas formerly much larger issues would be debated.

In Egypt, as elsewhere, trade unions appear to be increasingly marginal within the political process, and it is this marginalisation, an international phenomena, that accounts for the low profile elections.



Amina Shafik

This week's Soapbox speaker is a journalist in Al-Ahram, a member of the Press Syndicate Council and an expert on the trade union movement.

To The Editor

A democrat, not a Nazi

Sir — In reference to "Castles of Dust", published as a special supplement on the destruction of historical buildings in Garden City (*Al-Ahram Weekly*, 17-23 October), I strongly object to the quote attributed to a certain historian called Cooper about my late uncle Abbas Ibrahim Halim: "Prince Abbas Halim had fought for the Germans in the First World War, and was the ideology of National Socialism, and involved himself in trade unions," reads the quote. Obvious historians often but defamatory accusations against national figures like my late uncle and I suggest such sources should be used selectively and with discretion — if at all.

It is true that Abbas Halim was brought up in Germany. In his teens he entered Germany's Imperial Horse Guard and served as an aide-de-camp to Kaiser Wilhelm II. During the First World War he fought with the German forces in Belgium, France and Russia, was wounded several times and won the Iron Cross First Class. Although my uncle was indisputably influenced by German cultural and scientific achievements, there is a world of difference between being a lover of things German and "admirer of the ideology of National Socialism". In reality, Abbas Halim stands on record for his strong defense of parliamentary democracy in Egypt — for which he paid a heavy price both on the political and personal levels. In *Workers on the Nile* — a study of the Egyptian labour movement between 1882 and 1952 — historian Joel Beinin from Stanford University and Zachary Lockman from Harvard, describe my uncle's stand on the issue. "The young prince had long been on bad terms with his cousin King Fu'ad and sympathetic to the popular democratic cause led by the Wafd. In October 1930, soon after Sidqi Pasha announced his plans for a new constitution and electoral law, Abbas Halim published an appeal to the Egyptian

people in which he warned that the anti-democratic measures taken by the government were leading to civil war. Openly siding with the Wafd, he called on the king to change course and prevent catastrophe... The prince's actions infuriated the king, who promptly deprived him of his titles, his royal prerogatives and his allowance from the civil list. This only further enhanced the popularity of the young, vigorous and handsome Abbas Halim who had already shown his concern for the people and had now lost his title in defense of democracy." It seems to me that Beinin's account of my uncle's real and courageous commitment to democracy strongly contradicts Cooper's defamatory allegations about Abbas Halim's alleged "admission" for any Nazi ideology.

I would also like to add that my uncle's Garden City "palace" mentioned in the article, beside serving as party grounds for the local and foreign (British) aristocracy, also and more relevantly, served as headquarters of the National Federation of Trade Unions in Egypt (NFTUE) which had elected Abbas Halim as president in 1930. The growing strength of the workers' movement (the NFTUE included 58 unions and claimed a membership of between 300,000 and 400,000 in 1934) and its president's popularity, in fact caused the British to clamp down hard on the NFTUE. On 20 June 1934, the police surrounded my uncle's "palace" while he was away in Alexandria and prevented unionists from entering it. In retaliation, the NFTUE leadership decided to organise a demonstration on the following day in order to break the police siege of their headquarters. The ensuing confrontation between the workers and the police on 21 June resulted in the killing of one worker, the injury of many and the arrest of most NFTUE cadres. Upon his return to Cairo, my uncle was also arrested and detained for 26 days. But he was promptly released, explains Beinin, because "the prolonged detention of a great-grandson of Muhammad Ali attracted considerable attention, especially after he went on a hunger strike for several days, and became an embarrassment to the government."

I am referring to these events in my uncle's political career only to suggest the danger of quoting pseudo-authorities such as Cooper, who often conveniently misrepresent and distort history. Abbas Halim — an admired German culture, not National Socialism — and the palace on 6 Sharia Rostum was much more than a fashionable cocktail party circuit for the social and political elite.

Nezly Raby Masadi

Just say 'no'

Sir — When I first followed the Egyptian TV serial *Money and Soul*, I was mainly attracted by the love story. However, when I followed it again this year, my attention was grabbed by a very different theme.

This began with the scene where the main character, played by Ahmed Abdel-Aziz, is taken prisoner and tortured by Israeli forces to reveal Egypt's military secrets. The striking thing in this scene is the repetition of the word "no", it is loudly reiterated by the hero. He says, "Three million years of civilization say No, history says No, Dr Ezzan Abdallah says No, Abbas El-Dawri says No!"

The repetition of the word "no" is, I suspect, an intentional reference to President Hosni Mubarak's "no" to the recent Washington summit with US President Bill Clinton, Yasser Arafat, King Hussein and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Mubarak's "no" shocked the Israelis, and Netanyahu in particular. It also focused world attention on the deadlocked peace process in the Middle East.

The word "no" also figures prominently in the serial since it resulted in the October victory of 1973, when Egypt said no to Israeli occupation.

The lesson to be learned is: We, individuals and government, should say "no" to wrongdoing, regardless of the agony or punishment that might result. Again, we should make the best use of this effective weapon not only for Egypt's sake but also for the sake of all Arabs. **Asraf Mahmoud Saad**
Faculty of Al-Ahram
Cairo

Fundamental oppression

Sir — The state of affairs which writer Eghal Ahmad describes in "Taliban's unlikely story" (*Al-Ahram Weekly*, 17-23 October) is unimaginable! In Afghanistan, girls of all ages are banned from school. Schools are forbidden to teach "corrupt", modern, secular subjects. Music is banned. Men are obliged to grow their beards. Women are forbidden to work outside their homes and ordered to cover themselves from head to foot!

If fundamentalism is a danger to the world, extremism is a threat to humanity. What an oppressive ideology and style of government! Foreigners are looked at as criminals. Human rights are completely ignored. Freedom and self-expression are butchered. Equity vanishes to be replaced by inequality. The final outcome is backwardness, torture, ignorance and misery.

I wonder how such outdated beliefs flourish when the coming of 21st century is so close. May wisdom soon replace vulgarity.

Zarif Kamel Hakim
English Language Teacher
El-Daher Secondary School for Girls
Cairo

Latitudinal muddle

Sir — In "The sinking of the Dakkar", (*Al-Ahram Weekly*, 17-23 October), Galal Nassar writes that on 24 January 1968, at exactly 6.10am, Dakkar radioed Haifa to

report its position (latitude 68.34 North and longitude 26.26 East) — actually in the middle of Partapahdan Tekojarvi, a lake in the Finnish Lapland! How could the poor Dakkar reach this lake?

Paolo Lombardini
Zamalek
Cairo

Latitude corrected

Sir — I refer to the article entitled "The sinking of the Dakkar", (*Al-Ahram Weekly*, 17-23 October 1996).

The geographical position printed as 68.34 North should read 34.68 North, a position south east of the Greek island of Crete.

I seize this opportunity to congratulate all of you for the very interesting articles published in the *Al-Ahram Weekly*, and especially for the backpages, "People". However I suggest that your profile section should introduce more Egyptian women serving in the social and political activities of the country and less of the male politicians, of whom we have had enough, and who in any case receive wide coverage.

Mohamed El-Samanudi
Shipping consultant
Voula
Greece

Apology

We stand corrected. As Mr El-Samanudi correctly pointed out, the correct figure for the latitude of the Dakkar was 34.68 North. A mistake in typing the article, not the writer's, switched the figure to 68.34. Our thanks to both Mr Lombardini and Mr El-Samanudi for pointing out this error, for which we duly apologise.

The Editor

After completing *Les Mythes fondateurs de la politique israélienne* Roger Garaudy — visiting Cairo last week — was suddenly persona non grata. Publishers he had dealt with for decades refused to handle the book. He was indicted and now faces a possible prison sentence. *Al-Ahram Weekly* examines the controversy around a man who dared to question the Israelis' own version of the founding of their state



Roger Garaudy, accompanied by his Palestinian wife, with Naguib Mahfouz and, centre, Gamal El-Ghitani, during last week's visit to Cairo

Denying the myth

What is it about Roger Garaudy's latest work that has provoked the outrage of France's supposedly liberal, secular cultural establishment? Amina Rashid examines the controversy that has resulted in a leading intellectual being denied any opportunity to defend himself against the ultimate portmanteau charge, that of being an anti-Semite

In recent months Roger Garaudy has been subjected to what he terms a media lynching. Several major publishing houses, all of which had been happy to publish his works in the past, rejected his most recent book, *Les Mythes fondateurs de la politique israélienne*, which eventually was published at the writer's own expense. On the very first page of the book Garaudy tells his reader:

"After having for more than half a century published my books with major French publishing houses I am forced to publish this work *Semiotique* — i.e. at my own expense. This is because, since 1982, I have violated a taboo and criticised Israeli politics which for sometime now has been forbidden by the notorious Gayssot-Fabius Law of 13 July 1990, which restores in France the *delict d'opinion* of the Second Empire, supplementing weakness of argument with a repressive law."

"This is why libraries which intend to continue to do their job properly have to give their copies to the *La Bibliothèque de la Sorbonne*, the Roman Library of Paris, which has accepted this deposit of this *Semiotique*, just as it used to do with Roman books in the time of Constantine."

After the appearance of the book Garaudy was indicted under the Gayssot Law and he is now awaiting a hearing scheduled for 13 November. The Gayssot Law stipulates that whoever "contests one or several crimes against humanity such as those defined by article 6 of the statute of the military tribunal annexed to the London Accord of 8 May 1945" shall be liable to a term of imprisonment or subject to a fine.

But Garaudy, up till now, has not been given an opportunity to publicly answer the charges that have been levelled against him. Suddenly, he, and Abbé Pierre, who had the moral courage to publicly apologise to the Palestinian people for crimes committed against them in the name of the "promised land", found themselves blacklisted, and without any access to the French media.

So what could Garaudy's latest work possibly contain that would subject its author to such treatment in democratic, secular, liberal France?

The very title of Garaudy's rejected volume is perhaps enough to raise warning signs among publishers operating in a country where the mass media, and important sections of the cultural establishment, are dominated by a strong Zionist lobby. In the controversial volume Garaudy himself cites General de Gaulle's statement that the mass media was strongly influenced by pro-Israeli pressure groups.

Les Mythes fondateurs de la politique israélienne, however, is not quite the overt "political" statement that one would expect given the ideological war it provoked, though it does deal with a matter of central importance to contemporary social science — namely the fabrication of myths to construct hegemonic ideologies serving

the political interests of those in power.

Garaudy is particularly well-equipped to deal with such important issues, both as a researcher and writer. His philosophical, theological and literary background served him well, both in the research and writing of the present volume. Every statement is well-sourced and backed by an in-depth reading of historical, religious and political documents. He uses a vast number of literary texts in reconstructing the way old mythologies are misinterpreted to create new myths that can substitute for history and serve as propaganda.

Les Mythes fondateurs comprises three sections, the titles of which betray their content. In the first section, Theological Myths, Garaudy gives a thorough reading of the most important religious sources used by Zionism in constructing the myth of the promise, the myth of the chosen people and the myth of Joshua. He traces the transformation of the "promised land" into its present reality of conquered land. And it was precisely this aspect of his work that excited the sympathy of Abbé Pierre, who found it impossible to condone the conquering and massacring of one people to provide the promised land of another.

Garaudy, in analysing theological myths, exposes the means by which biblical texts are decontextualised, removed from their religious context and employed to validate a rewriting of history from the point of view of a "chosen" people who, like all chosen peoples, concern themselves, sooner or later, with ethnic cleansing. It is a process with which we should all be familiar, a process Hitler was happy to utilise against Jews and non-Jews alike.

Garaudy is meticulous in tracing the dissension expressed by Jewish theologians concerning the distortion of religion by the Zionist movement, and examines the links between a number of Zionists and leaders in Nazi Germany.

The second section of the book, on myths of the twentieth century, deals directly with sensitive political issues, most of which concern the events of the Second World War. He includes the anti-Fascist nature of Zionism, the justice of the Nuremberg trials, the six million victims of the Holocaust, and the idea of a "land without people" — Palestine — among such contemporary myths. It is in this section that Garaudy provides ample evidence of an alliance between some Zionist leaders and Nazism, as well as discussing the continuing significance of the figure of six million Jewish victims of the Nazis, and it is precisely this section which created such an uproar among the powerful Zionist lobby.

"Among the examples Garaudy cites of the unholy alliance between some Zionist leaders and Nazi Germany, one concerns former Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, who cooperated with the Damascus-based office of the Nazi Secret Service, and who was arrested by

the British in December 1941 charged with 'terrorism and collaboration with the Nazi enemy'.

"Such a past did not prevent Yitzhak Shamir from becoming prime minister" comments Garaudy, "...because in reality all Zionist rulers are, despite their internal rivalries, pursuing the same racist objective."

As for the figure of six million Jewish victims of the Nazis, Garaudy quotes numerous sources to show the inaccuracy of this estimate. Among the sources he uses is *The American Jewish Year Book*, no. 5702 of 22 September 1941-11 September 1942, published in Philadelphia by The Jewish Publication Society of America. Garaudy states: "It [the publication] says on p. 666 that after the maximum expansion of the Nazis... and counting all the Jews who remained in Germany, the number of Jews in Europe under German rule was 3,140,722. So how could six million be exterminated?" (p.161).

He explains the significance of this "nombre d'or" in terms of the need of the then emerging State of Israel to establish the "unprecedented nature of Jewish suffering as a justification for its establishment. And there was, of course, the practical use of increasing the number in order to inflate the sum total of the reparations the state of Israel received from Austria and Germany. Yet so pervasive is this quantitative estimation of human suffering, this cynical numbers game, that to question the number of victims by pointing out just why the figure has been inflated leaves one open to charges of the most virulent anti-Semitism. Nor do those who hurl such accusations ever stop to think why the suffering of three million is somehow less than that of six, or the way in which the cynical manipulation of figures belittles the actual fact.

But of course the figure six is also a chosen number. God created the world in six days. Six is a number with resonance. The June 1967 War is the Six Day War. Israel has always shown astuteness in coining phrases with such biblical resonances — its invasion of Lebanon it chose to term Peace for Galilee; a later invasion became Grapes of Wrath. "A land without people for a people without land" is simply one more piece of snappy titling, and the Arabs know better than anyone the way it was utilised to justify the dispossession and expulsion of the Palestinians, to be replaced by Jewish migrants from all over the world.

The third and final section of the book deals with the political mileage extracted from such myths in the creation of a new reality that would appeal not only to the sentiments of the West, but which would also influence the victims' understanding of the tragedy with which they were faced.

It should suffice here to cite only two among Garaudy's many examples of the pervasive influence of the Zionist lobby in shaping a false consciousness of Israel. The first concerns the skillful ideological ma-

nipulation of the sense of guilt felt among Western peoples following the atrocities committed during the Second World War. Garaudy illustrates how the media have co-opted to ignore Hitler's initial aim, beginning in 1933, of liquidating communists — a drive which gained him the support of many Western leaders — particularly the German Communist Party, among the largest in Western Europe. It is only when that persecution was extended to include "Bolshevik Jews" that accounts really begin. The millions of other victims of death camps are subsequently ignored in order to give primacy to the ethnic cleansing of Jews.

This pattern has not been limited to the mass media but also effects cultural life. The films *Night and Fog* by Alain Resnais, Claude Lanzmann's *La Shoah*, the production of numerous biographies and testimonies of those who escaped the Holocaust continue to feed an almost cultish strand of French cultural production that keeps alive the suffering of Jews at the hands of the Nazis, and which somehow manages to contrive to ignore the fates of the others who make up the 50 million victims of the Second World War.

Garaudy's second example deals with the financing of the "Israeli miracle". The figures Garaudy provides are an eloquent testimony to the much hailed "Israeli miracle" that made the desert bloom and created a militarily efficient democracy.

Garaudy quotes former Israeli Finance Minister Pinhas Sapir as saying that Israel received \$7 billion in aid between 1949 and 1966. Garaudy goes on to show that the total aid received by "under-developed peoples" between 1951 and 1959 reached \$3.164 billion while Israel received, during the same period, \$400 million. Thus, as Garaudy says, Israelis (1.7 million at that time), constituting less than a thousandth of the world's "under-developed" population received one tenth of all aid i.e. two million Israelis received more than a hundred times what the two billion inhabitants of the Third World had received.

Garaudy also lists the financial support given to Israel by the Jews of the diaspora, its preferential trade agreements, the writing off of debts, and, most important, US aid. Of the latter Garaudy says: "The total official American aid that Israel receives annually corresponds to more than \$1,000 per capita, a top up to be added to its national revenue, Israeli national revenues per capita already being more than three times the gross national revenue per capita of Egypt and of most other African countries." (p.240)

And certainly this closely argued and consistently damning indictment of the powers structuring the world makes sense of the conspiracy of silence Garaudy confronts, and explains why he has so consistently been denied any platform to defend himself against accusations of negationism.

Plain Talk

London has always been a city with a thriving theatrical tradition. Both in the West End, and in the numerous fringe theatres that have sprouted in every corner of the capital, plays by classical and contemporary dramatists are forever being staged.

My first experience of London's theatre land came in 1945 when I began my first government posting as cultural attaché. It was a very exciting time, when the theatre was experiencing a period of immense optimism. It was as if, after the bleak years of the war, the theatre was determined to reassert itself.

Strangely, there were echoes of that initial experience, some half a century ago now, when I visited London earlier this month. What impressed me on this recent trip was that the theatre still appeared to be in robust health, and was still continuing with the presentation of tried and trusted plays and playwrights alongside new works by innovative young writers.

The jewel in the crown of London's theatrical establishment is probably the National Theatre, located on the South Bank of the Thames, a vast sixties complex which when it was first constructed attracted a great deal of controversy, but which is now established as a public favourite and has indeed been listed as a building of architectural importance. This month I returned to the National Theatre and saw two plays, *The Master Builder* at the Lyttelton, Jonson's *The Alchemist* at the Olivier, and in the heart of the West End, at the Adelphi, the musical *Sunset Boulevard*.

Of course *Sunset Boulevard* has long been in the repertoire of the National, which has staged productions of all his plays with many distinguished actors. I well remember Peggy Ashcroft and Ralph Richardson son playing alongside one another as Ella Renchert and Borkman. This time, however, Borkman was played by Paul Scofield, whom I first saw on stage during the fifties in a number of Shakespearean productions, while Renchert was played by Vanessa Redgrave.

Both the Lyttelton and the Olivier were packed on the evenings I attended, a testament to the central role the theatre continues to play in the cultural life of the city. The Royal National Theatre, which was founded in 1963, with Lawrence Olivier as its first chairman, continues to play an innovative role in that cultural life, as it has done for over three decades. For this period it has staged, on average, 20 new productions a year, opened six days a week, 52 weeks a year, in every twelve months, giving around 1,000 performances, acted by a resident company numbering 150, before an annual audience of 600,000.

The National is an independent institution which receives the bulk of its funding from the Arts Council.

At present, ambitious schemes for an overhaul are being discussed. Already 75 per cent of the estimated £2 million needed for the project has been promised by the Arts Council, and plans are well underway to raise the remaining 25 per cent. The forthcoming programme looks as exciting as ever, with productions of the Oedipus plays, a new commission, *Blinded by the Sun*, by Stephen Pollakoff, *The Seven Wonders of the River Ota* by Robert Lepage, Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* and a revival of the huge musical, *Guys and Dolls*, which played to capacity audiences in the early eighties and established, for want of a better word, the musical as an ultra-respectable genre.

As for the West End, nobody could fail to be impressed by the production values of *Sunset Boulevard*, a musical based on the classic film starring Gloria Swanson. And I was delighted to find that the role created by Swanson was played by Paula Clark, whose period of child stardom, in the forties, coincided with my first residence in Britain.

These are the plays. The obverse side of the theatrical life of the city might be represented by the reviewers, those arbiters of taste whose pronouncements are sometimes feared but who have, nonetheless, established themselves as central to the life blood of the theatre. Drama critics, on the whole, command a great deal of respect. And they occasionally establish themselves as stars in their own firmament, as was the case with Kenneth Tynan, whose reputation has grown and grown since his tragically early death.

Mursi Saad El-Din

Twist in the tale

Though Arab intellectuals have generally welcomed Roger Garaudy, his reception has not been unanimously friendly, writes Mona Anis

For those who doubt the credentials of Arabs to enter the age of post-modernism and deconstruction, albeit in a minor capacity, at the funeral rites of all grand narratives it might come as something of a surprise to learn that Roger Garaudy was not met, during his recent visit to the Arab world, with the unanimous applause that primitive people reserve to welcome the enemy of their enemy.

In Lebanon, for example — the Arab country with perhaps the greatest claim to deconstruction — some intellectuals were quick to denounce him not only as a back and an intellectual of inferior culture, but also as an anti-Semite. The first charge is understandable given the increasing propensity to judge the work of intellectuals purely in terms of their contribution to post-modernist discourse. For indeed Garaudy is not a post-modernist, or post-structuralist for that matter. He has made no secret of his distaste for structuralism which he characterised, in the late 1960s, as "the philosophy of the death of man".

The second charge, though, is a bit odd, given Garaudy's insistent repudiation of the importance of distinguishing between Judaism and Zionism, paying — great believer as he is in God and religions — homage to the former, while branding the latter as pure racism. Arab intellectuals are, only too, familiar with the distinctions on which Garaudy insists: many of them struggled for decades to persuade the international community of the validity of such a distinction. Their efforts were finally crowned with the passing of a UN motion equating Zionism with racism. Though this resolution was annulled in the 1990s, after the advent of the New World Order, one would expect Arabs at least to still acknowledge the racist nature of Zionism, given that they are provided, on a daily basis, with fresh evidence of this

racism as practiced by the state of Israel.

Ironically, those who attacked Garaudy and denounced him as an anti-Semite are precisely the people who are never happier than when they have a grand narrative to deconstruct. Why then the uncritical acceptance of only one narrative, the narrative sacred to the state of Israel and its supporters all over the world? Why this strange willingness to concur in the view that anyone critical of Israel is automatically an anti-Semite?

Some Arab intellectuals go to ridiculous extremes in attacking anyone who dares speak about the powerful Zionist lobby controlling the international media, to the extent that one such intellectual engaged in the most ludicrous contortions simply to refute Marion Brandt's suggestion that the influence of the Jewish lobby was pervasive in Hollywood.

Last July, I happened to be in Syria during Garaudy's visit to Damascus. Reports in the official media (and there is no such thing as unofficial media in Syria) made it quite clear that Garaudy was the guest of the state. And perhaps because no one in Syria expects the state to permit any post-modernist nonsense to be heard at its guests, Syrian intellectuals limited themselves to listening and discussing what Garaudy had to say about his anti-Israeli book and the limits of freedom of expression in the West. They did so, understandably, with a certain amount of glee.

Garaudy's visit to Egypt last week was a different matter. Neither an official guest of the state, nor invited by the opposition, he was in Cairo at the behest of the Union of Arab Artists, though the fact that this union is headed by the Egyptian playwright Saadeddin Wahba, a staunch opponent of cultural normalisation with Israel, lent the

whole event an oppositional twist. Certainly the majority of the audience who turned up to display their solidarity with the French intellectual currently pilloried in France for his pro-Arab sentiments, also wished to register their opposition to Israel's most recent displays of arrogance.

One important section of the Egyptian opposition, though, was noticeable by its absence. And while the venue in which Garaudy delivered his first public lecture — attended by 1,000 spectators — was hardly likely to appeal to the radical Islamists, their low profile continued throughout a four day visit during which Garaudy lectured in eight places, including the Journalists' syndicate, a favoured venue for political activism.

Garaudy's first public lecture at the Mariott was attended by a crew of personalities, including almost all the editors-in-chief of the Egyptian national and opposition press, as well as leading politicians, including the Secretary-General of the Arab League. They had arrived in force to welcome Garaudy and listen to his overtly political lecture on US hegemony, the role of Israel within the global American imperialist scheme, and the destruction of Iraq as a necessary step towards establishing American hegemony over the oil fields of the Arab Gulf states.

It was during this lecture that I began to wonder whether some of the attacks launched against Garaudy in the petro-dollar financed Arabic press were entirely unconnected with his position vis-à-vis the Second Gulf War and the presence of American troops in the region.

It may well come as another small surprise for those in the West who seek to measure Garaudy's conversion to Islam in terms of lucrative rewards to discover that his brand of Islam does not go down particularly well with many of the richest and most influential patrons in the Islamic world.

When asked, at the end of his first lecture, for the reasons of his great shift from Communism to Islam via Christianity, Garaudy's answer would have shocked many Egyptian Islamists had they been present. For him this was no shift.

"When I went to receive the King Faisal award in Saudi Arabia I told them I had come with the bible under my right arm and Karl Marx under my left," Garaudy told the audience.

There exists in Egypt a group of what have come to be termed enlightened Islamists. *Al-Ahram* columnist Fahmi Howaidi is a prominent member of this group. When, a few months ago, articles began to appear in Arabic magazines accusing Garaudy of heresy, Howaidi defended him on the pages of *Al-Ahram*: "Garaudy is now awaiting the sentence of the court in a case where his adversaries are demanding his imprisonment. It is very important the the Arabic and Islamic world, the place concerned most with the Palestinian cause, declares its support and solidarity with the man who took this honourable stance vis-à-vis that cause."

"It is strange, though, that at this exact moment an unjust campaign should be waged against the man, accusing him of heresy and blasphemy. It is a sad thing that this campaign to assassinate him religiously, launched by certain people in the Arab world, coincides with the Israeli campaign to assassinate him politically."

"What a sad coincidence. But should it turn out not to be a coincidence, then we are, no doubt, facing a great catastrophe. Whatever the case might be, we need to consider things very seriously and be alert," Howaidi concluded.



A massive audience flocked to hear Garaudy's first lecture in Cairo denouncing American hegemony

Dump to model district

Western Mounira has changed from being an impoverished militants' haven to a model of a comprehensively developed area, reports Mariz Tadros

"If you had asked me to drive to El-Bohey street five years ago, I would not have stopped for you. Any sound-minded taxi driver would have refused to drive day or night to that place," said Said, the taxi driver. Having reached the street, it was difficult for one to understand why. There is now a grand youth centre, a roomy bus and micro-bus depot, green spaces and the houses along the street resemble those of any ordinary lower-middle class neighbourhood. Why any driver would not want to enter this neighbourhood is difficult to imagine.

Three or four years ago, the media was full of accounts of militant Islamist-government clashes, the most vicious of which took place in 1992. Not long after, articles titled "The Islamic Republic of Imbaba" and "Sheikh Gaber, the President of the Republic of Imbaba" were filled with accounts of how about 12,000 armed security forces laid siege to Western Mounira and stormed the neighbourhood. After three weeks of fierce fighting, the security forces reappeared with Sheikh Gaber in handcuffs as 600 or so of his followers had been killed, wounded or arrested.

According to a senior police official who participated in the siege of the area four years ago and who spoke to *Al-Ahram Weekly* on condition of anonymity, El-Bohey street today is unrecognisable from the way it was in the 1980s and up to the early 1990s. "I remember the entire street was littered with mountains of garbage that were left to rot for weeks. The street was unpaved. Crime was rampant and the terrorists there were doing all that was in their power to close off the area so that they could operate freely," he said.

He also remembers that the police used to get reports of women being prohibited from walking in the streets after a certain hour or being harassed if they were not dressed in a manner compliant with the Islamists' interpretation of proper

Islamic wear.

These were also the days when the militants set their own rules in the midst of an anarchy of destruction. Problems and quarrels were resolved through the mediation of Islamist activists who "did not hesitate to ask for money for the *Da'wa Islamiya* (Islamic propagation) in return for their services," as he was quick to point out.

"Our men had to go in there under cover as sewerage workers, electricity men and garbage collectors to infiltrate the area. The anarchy pervading in the squatter areas was the perfect hide-out for the Islamists," reiterated the source.

Today, there are three police stations in Western Mounira and even the governor of Giza has a special office on El-Bohey street. "When Mr Shehata became governor of Giza, he said he came to office as a governor for Imbaba. All the state authorities co-operated to upgrade the unplanned squatter areas in the district so as to reduce the tension which had gripped the area following the elimination of extremist strongholds," said an article in *Al-Ahram* dated 17 October 1996.

In fact, Western Mounira has been allocated more funding for its development than any other district in north Giza. Between 1992/3 and 1995/6, LE372.5 million was spent on constructing, upgrading and polishing Western Mounira.

Hussein Ghazali Ali, District Council Chief for north Giza told the *Weekly* that Western Mounira, which covers an area of two square kms or 100 feddans on the north western edge of Imbaba, used to be agricultural land. Landlords started selling patches of land in the 1970s, when the mass migrations from Upper and Lower Egypt to Giza and Cairo brought to the area many people looking for a place to live, explained Ali. "Each migrant only really needed 50 to 60 metres of land. He just wanted a cheap refuge," said Ali. This was also a convenient arrangement for the landlord because the land

sometimes sold for more than its revenues through cultivation.

"The land was distributed among these people with no consideration for urban planning, with no public utilities and with no regard for the living conditions of the buyers. These unplanned shelters continued to flourish, ignored by the government and the local administration," said Ali.

The population grew at an incredible pace. Western Mounira alone now is home to nearly one million inhabitants, which represents one third of the population of the north Giza District. An increase in population density "and the [inhabitants'] misery only encouraged the growth of militancy because the Islamists were able to exploit the absence of the most basic of services, the prevailing ignorance and high rate of illiteracy to influence the people," asserted Ali.

According to Ali, once the authorities embarked on an intensive phase of development, tensions began to gradually dissolve. LE257 million was allocated for the installation of sewerage services, while USAID contributed to the funding. Garbage elimination equipment for Western Mounira cost LE5 million. Another LE30 million was poured into the installation of water pipes to provide clean water in addition to LE1 million for street lighting. Streets were paved, costing over LE3 million. In all, over LE296 million of Egyptian government monies was spent on providing infrastructure for Western Mounira.

The logical next step would have been to provide the same kind of infrastructure to other deprived areas in Giza but instead more money was poured into Western Mounira to provide efficient social, legal and health services and even recreational centres. Programmes for combating illiteracy, which was particularly rampant amongst the women (80 per cent) were introduced. Schools, hospitals and communication systems were established.

"We even had contracts negotiated with mechanics' workshops so that children who drop out of school would not roam around the streets but be trained and given employment. We had them employed in 40 mechanics' workshops under our surveillance," Ali explained.

This year, the upgrading of Western Mounira was completed and "Western Mounira was declared to be a model of the development of unplanned slum areas," he declared.

"It's great that Western Mounira has seen such a facelift, but what about us? Do we have to have a problem with the Islamists before anyone cares about us?" asked one inhabitant of Bashter who wished to remain anonymous. Bashter is just two kms away from Western Mounira and is a blend of agricultural land and unplanned urban squatter settlements. "They have sewerage services installed there but I still have to use tin containers to dispose of the family sewage every day," complained another woman. "They don't have a security problem anymore. But every time a fight breaks out between the butchers here, there is nothing we can do to stop them," said another woman who also wished to remain anonymous.

When asked about this, Ali said that the sector of Bashter under his authority has been provided with infrastructure but that the part in question must happen to be "not within the boundaries of our district. It would be under the Oseem District which is not under my authority."

It is estimated that about 2,259,000 people, accounting for about 35-40 per cent of the Giza population live in squatter conditions in other unplanned areas.

Once greater focus is directed to the development of other slum areas in Giza, next time Prince Charles visits Cairo, he will be able to visit any district of his choice and hopefully it will be as highly developed as the Western Mounira he visited last year.



A house in order

There were many foreign girls at my school, but most of them dressed, behaved and were generally brought up exactly like us. Not Monique, however. Monique was French. Her mother taught Greek and Latin at the Bab El-Louk Lycée. Monique was physically different, to start with: she was slim and stoop, almost boyish, her soft blond hair cropped short. We, on the other hand, either tended to be fat or were inordinately skinny, our long hair worn in tresses or tight pony tails. Very few of us could boast a sportive deportment. She always looked like someone who had completed a track and field event, someone who would look really good in shorts. In our school, where sports were more or less lackadaisically promoted and practiced, she stood out. We were shy and sensitive, crying at the slightest provocation, while she was forward and direct, and was never observed sulking.

In the afternoons, on the rare occasions when we did not have homework, we went to the Gezira Club and sat at the Lido with our parents or walked around in groups catching up on the latest school gossip. Monique never joined us. She had to watch her little brother and galloped in his pursuit whenever he gave her the slip, which was often. "If he bursts himself my mother will kill me," she would gasp, catching her breath. When we insisted that she stay with us for a little while she would smile apologetically. "I have to look after Philippe, I can't." Off she would go, dragging the screaming little boy back to the children's playground.

Monique was excused from school on Wednesdays, an unheard-of state of affairs. Not that we did not all try to worm out of going to school every now and then, but having a regular day off during the week was something else altogether. Our teachers refused to assuage our curiosity, simply saying that Monique was staying home on Wednesdays. Every week one of us was in charge of keeping her up-to-date, a custom reserved only for those of us who missed school because of illness and presented a formal letter from our parents before being readmitted to class. We were inordinately excited on Thursdays, expecting an explanation of Monique's absence, but we were always disappointed. Moreover, we had noticed repeatedly that Monique was late and came long after the bell, sometimes even after we had all taken our places in the classroom, yet she had never been asked to go to the headmistress to explain her tardiness. Some teachers even smiled and winked at her when she arrived, red-faced and out of breath. Finally one Wednesday, Marlene who had been Monique's good friend for a long time, agreed to let us in on the secret, making us swear beforehand over to tell anyone what we knew. Monique, she whispered, had to do housework. Wednesday was cleaning day: *le grand ménage*, during which mattresses had to be put out and beaten and floors waxed. Monique did it all. At once, images of Dickens were conjured up. Marlene insisted, however, that her friend was loved and well-treated by her parents. Her mother believed that there was more to education than getting good grades at school and spending long hours doing homework. Monique had to learn responsibility and how to keep a house in order. One day she would be living alone in France, going to university and managing her own life. We were speechless. A few of us carried secret dreams of going to university abroad, but we knew that this would not come to pass. Monique, on the other hand, was not only going to do it, she was being prepared for it. Admiration for her grew. One day, on my way to school, I saw her speeding home on her bicycle, a basket full of groceries strapped behind her. This was why she was often late, I thought. She had to go to market before school.

From that day on, I made sure to ask for extra sandwiches, having noticed that Monique nibbled on a biscuit at lunchtime or simply tried to catch up on her homework. She obviously had had no time to plan her own food. I, on the other hand, had my sandwiches prepared dutifully by my mother and the idea of having to do without, filled me with unbearable anxiety. The year wore on with most of us only intent on passing the Baccalauréat. Most of us were excused from making our own beds in the morning, let alone doing housework. All that was required of us was that we get top marks. In the end, Monique, despite her alternative upbringing, did not do worse than most. We lost sight of her and I forgot all about her until I had to run my own house a few years later. This territory was virgin, as far as I was concerned. I had never used a mop and had problems deciding on the correct manner to handle a broomstick. At the beginning of my marriage I was very often tempted to throw in the towel and run to my parents and a life sheltered from the cruel reality of raw vegetables and dusty curtains. The thought of Monique always stopped me. If she had been able to do it while still almost a child, so could I now. I am sorry to say that I never managed real proficiency in this field. I have always been very average at household chores and soon convinced my husband that it made sense to let me work and pay someone more capable to do housework. As time went by, I became an expert at dodging domestic chores and brought up my daughters in blissful ignorance of this side of life. "Better have careers," I advised them firmly. I often wonder if Monique, somewhere in France, is as grateful as I am for home delivery pizza.

Fayza Hassan

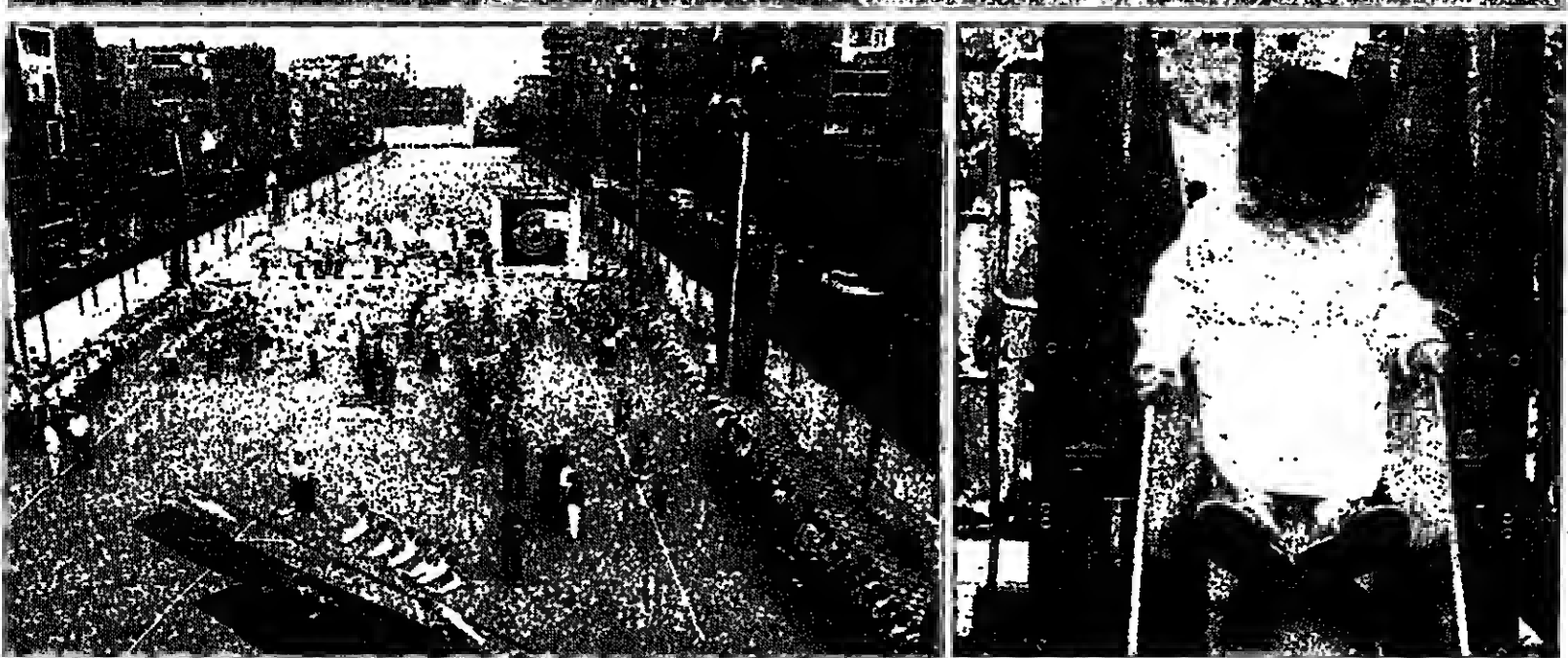
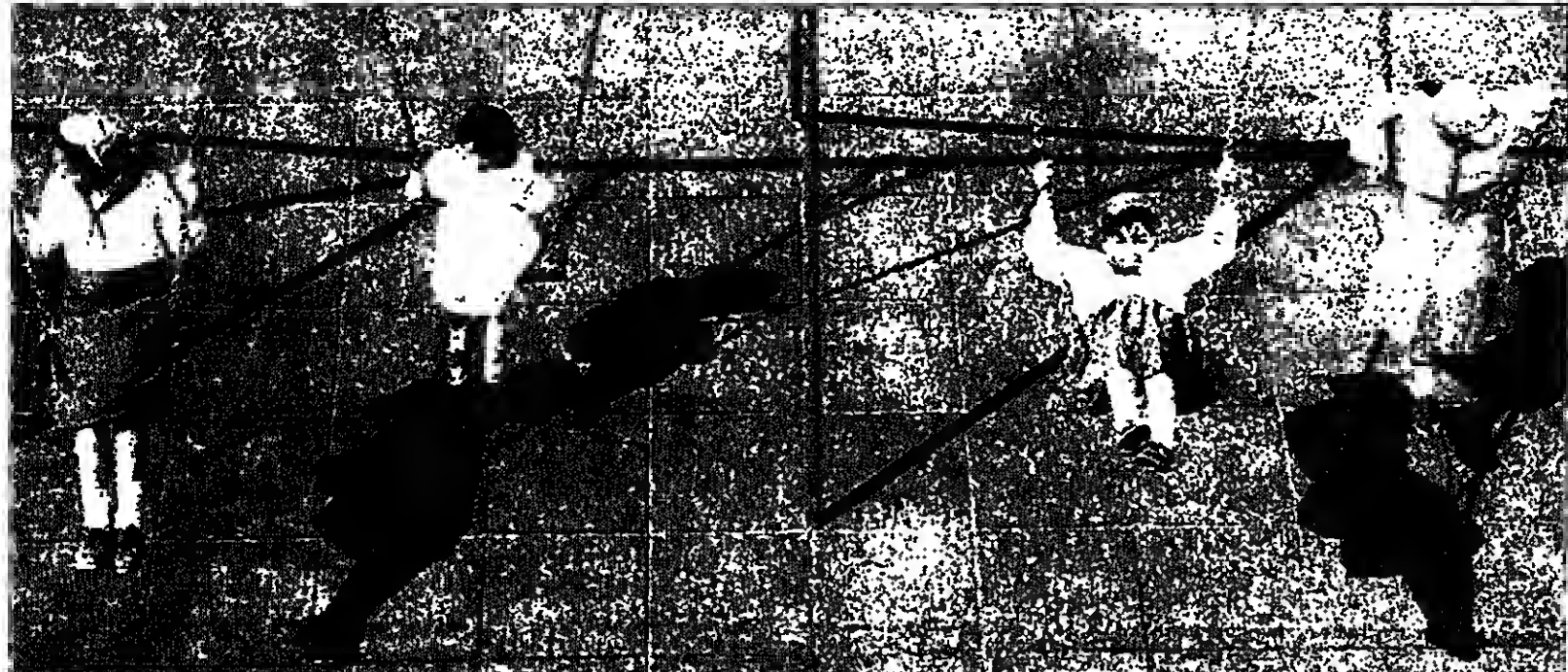
Prince's playground

FATIMA could hardly wait for the ribbon to be cut in inaugurating the new playground at El-Bouhi Youth Centre in Imbaba. Wearing a white dress for the occasion, she jumped on the slide as soon as Giza Governor Abdel-Rehim Shehata and British Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Malcolm Moss, finished the dedication last week.

With similar anticipation, last year 15,000 people lined the streets approaching El-Mounira El-Gharbiya in the heart of Imbaba as Britain's Prince Charles made his way towards El-Bouhi. The British royal pledged funding for a playground at the centre where nearly 10,000 children use the facilities.

The new playground, which cost LE150,000, is the latest addition to the centre's resources which include two reading libraries and a range of sports facilities. Opened in 1994, the centre was part of official efforts to upgrade the slum areas of Imbaba, once firm Islamist militant strongholds.

Governor Shehata described a continuing rehabilitation programme for the area: "We estimate five years to bring these areas to acceptable standards. We plan to open 10 playgrounds every fiscal year in urban and rural areas. Four years ago there was nothing of this sort. Health centres, schools and youth centres complement each other."



photos: Jihan Ammar

Supra Dagma

Guava 'khoshaf'

Ingredients:
1 kg fresh guavas
150 gms sugar
1 cup water
1/4 cup fresh lemon juice

Method
Wash the guavas well then peel the outer rind. Cut each one of them in half and scoop the pulp with a teaspoon and set aside. Cut the guava flesh into small pieces, bite sizes diced at random. Put the scooped pulp in the vegetable moulin and grind it in order to get a milky emulsion. Only the seeds will remain in the strainer to be discarded. Pour the guava pulp emulsion in an electrical blender, then add the water, sugar and lemon juice. Blend vigorously until you get a thick milky juice, then add it to the guava you had diced. Stir well all ingredients together, blending them in, then pour into a glass container, cover and refrigerate. Serve chilled as a dessert or at breakfast.

Tips for this recipe:
1) When you buy the guava you should pick up the very tough and hard ones.
2) The lemon juice prevents the oxidation of the guava which contains plenty of iron, thus keeping it white in colour. So be very fast in using it over the diced guava and emulsion made from the pulp, or else it will turn black in colour.

Moushira Abdel-Malek

Restaurant review

Joys of the garden

Nigel Ryan finds the perfect pergola for lunch

There is something a little special about Andrea, a garden restaurant that sits discretely along the banks of the Marioutiyya canal, almost on the outskirts of the city. It is not necessarily to do with the food, though the food is undoubtedly good. Rather, it has to do with the garden. For the reason you go to Andrea is to eat their undoubtedly good food in the garden, at tables set beneath arched pergolas dripping with bougainvillea, surrounded by tubs of flowering plants set in beds of greenery. It is an idyllic spot, as far removed from the hustle and bustle of Cairo as one could hope, at least within the city limits.

You will know when you are approaching the restaurant because of the wafts of smoke rising from the charcoal grill which is set near to the gate. Beyond the grill are domed structures where bread is made, and beyond these the garden, with clusters of tables and black, rush seated ladder back chairs. There is an indoor restaurant, presumably for colder times, but one would have to be dining in the midst of a thunder storm to willingly vacate the garden terrace for the great indoors.

The menu is simple — a variety of mezzes, quail, *shish taouk*, liver, *kofia*, grilled meat or chicken. Add to this perfect weather for dining outdoors, and an atmosphere that seems to positively welcome children who can dash about in the garden almost out of earshot and certainly out of harm's way, and you have the perfect ingredients for a family meal. It would also, sighed my colleague, a little wistful beneath the trellis, be ideal for romantic encounters. Which, I might add, is quite possibly true. But back to business. The mezzes arrived

first, accompanied by small *baladi* leaves made on the premises. The stuffed vine leaves were excellent and the salads, including potatoes tossed in herbs, sweet pickled green peppers, beetroot with copious and delicious quantities of garlic, *babaganough*, *tehina* and yoghurt, were a rather large notch above average. Then came the liver, served, as should be the case, immediately it is cooked. Calf liver, buttery in texture and utterly delicious. The *shish taouk*, enormous skewers of marinated chicken interspersed with tomatoes, arrived with halves of chicken — not of the steam-rolled variety, but fresh and mercifully not overcooked.

The secret, of course, to this kind of cooking is careful marketing. It is not merely a question of sticking any bit of meat over the charcoal, and then throwing together a limp salad and plonking it in front of a customer. If things were this easy everyone would be a successful restaurateur. What the staff at Andrea do, apart from being friendly and courteous — which in itself is an increasingly rare combination — is to cook and serve ingredients that have been selected by people who know exactly what they are doing. Which is what makes eating at Andrea such a delight. That, and of course, the garden.

Lunch, for five adults, who arrived hungry and left entirely satisfied, came to LE115, an amount that included soft drinks, mineral water, and a beer for the wistful romantic to my right.

Andrea, Ter'iet El-Marioutiyya, (off Pyramids Road)

Al-Ahram Weekly

Crossword

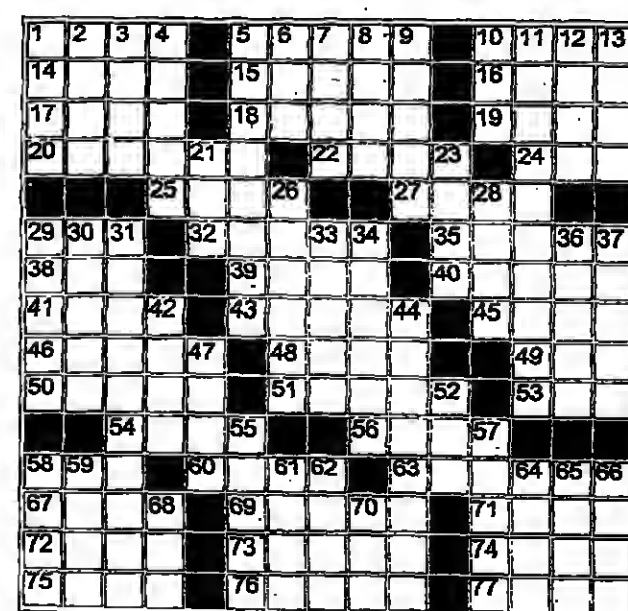
By Samia Abdennour

Across
1. Rip up (4)
5. Type of green quartz (5)
10. Soreness (4)
14. Culture media (4)
15. Glossy black; plunder (5)
16. Needy (4)
17. Comb. form for "single" (4)
18. Force out (5)
19. Make-up case (4)
20. Hallelujahs (6)
22. Footfall (4)
24. Wrath (3)
25. Tardy (4)
27. Existence (4)
29. US group in charge of medical personnel (3)
32. Billiousness (5)
35. Narrow valley on the moon's surface (5)
38. Damp (3)
39. Fasse (4)
40. Verification; inquiry

Down
1. Sloping surface (4)
2. Individuals (4)
3. Zola novel (4)
4. Humorous (5)
5. Fame; stature (8)
6. Sovereignty in India (3)
7. Halt! pl. (4)

(5)
8. Tale, jumbled (4)
9. Ecclesiastic official (5)
10. It follows "washing" and precedes "fountain" (4)
11. Inn where caravans rest (5)
12. Ancient Hindu scriptures (4)
13. Seine (3)
14. Nucleus (5)
15. Proclamation (5)
16. Weather directions (3)
17. Musical symbol (4)
18. Pour out (4)
19. Place (3)
20. Lichen or liverwort (4)
21. First voyage (6)
22. Where Java and Qatar are (4)
23. Lasso (5)
24. Be delicious (4)
25. Inert gas (4)
26. Jewellery measure (5)
27. Line of descent (4)
28. Miss Ferber (45)
29. Crème de la crème (5)
30. Cattle (4)

31. Religious group (4)
32. Move through (5)
33. Baboon (3)
34. Quadrilles 910)
35. Time slot (4)
36. Name of a US port, lake and canal (4)
37. Petit..., epilepsy (3)
38. Flippant (4)
39. Develop; unfold (6)
40. Times (4)
41. Flooded (5)
42. Free-for-all (5)
43. Glamour (10)
44. Finished (5)
45. Set again in order for publication (6)
46. Painfully loaded (5)



47. Hearten (5)
48. Fellow, Sc. (4)
49. A chemical mixture (8)
50. Article (4)
51. Pekoe (4)
52. Oblige; squadron (5)
53. Hilarity (5)
54. Plate of glass (4)
55. Lighter upper crust of earth's crust (4)
56. Asian dress (4)
57. Face the music (4)
58. All ways (4)
59. Call for; prerequisite (4)
60. Literary gossip about a person (3)
61. To make lace for trimming (3)

Al-Ahram: A Diwan of contemporary life

On Wednesday morning, 7 May 1902, the Cairo Court of Appeals convened to hear the first of its many notorious cases of the 20th century. We leave it to the *Al-Ahram* correspondent to describe the opening of that morning's session as it illustrates the general complexion of the trial.

"By 8am, hundreds of people had already arrived, even though it was commonly known that no one would be allowed entry unless they had a pass. When those with passes did arrive, they pushed past the guards at the doorway and made their way to the courtroom. There they saw hundreds more people pushing and shoving in order to get inside, while none of the policemen there made a move to prevent them. After the newspaper owners entered and found their seats, everyone else was ordered to leave. People began to push and shove, and were it not for the mercy of God, a brawl would have broken out. The guards and the police began to pull this person and that by the hand and drag them here and push them there, and one's ears began to grow deaf from the hubbub. Eventually, the guards and the police cordoned the people off and pushed them back until they were enclosed behind the columns like a flock of sheep. After a while, they were allowed to enter one by one. Hardly had we settled in our places and breathed a sigh of relief, praising God that all turned out well, than the bailiff entered and told the newspaper correspondents that their places were reserved for newspaper owners, not for correspondents, although it is well known that the places are reserved for correspondents and not the publishers. Eventually, however, we found our places and sat down, thank God!"

At 9am precisely, the judiciary panel entered the courtroom, with the Egyptian justice, Yahya Bek Ibrahim, presiding. The other two judges were British, justices Conny and Berry; the prosecution was represented by Safwat Bek. Once all were seated, the chief justice called the session into order and proceedings began. The case: the theft of a bull from the khedive's Al-Radiya farm a month and a half previously, on 25 March. Livestock thievery was a common enough crime in the Egyptian countryside. But in this case, important political and social factors came into play.

Al-Ahram's first report on the incident informs us that a Gharbiya Governorate notable, Ahmed El-Minshawi Pasha, as soon as he learned of the theft, launched a search for the perpetrators. His suspicions fell upon certain individuals in the village of Shobragra. The Tanta district police commissioner who was brought in to conduct the investigations, succeeded in extracting confessions from the suspects who admitted to having stolen the bull, slaughtered it and thrown its pelt into the Nile.

There would have been nothing out of the ordinary about the crime itself, were it not for the fact that it occurred on a farm that happened to be part of the royal estate. It also involved a major landowner whose enthusiasm for chasing down the criminals was fired by his desire to work his way into

the khedive's good graces and by his keenness to make of the offenders an example that would deter future encroachments by peasants on the land of rural dignitaries, royal or not. The man did his duty and apprehended the criminals. But then the matter took an unexpected turn.

Al-Ahram's correspondent in Tanta relates that when the district commissioner brought the accused into the prosecution's office, the prosecutor ordered the men detained in Tanta pending investigation. The commissioner did not do as told. He took the accused back to the village, "to the estate of Ahmed Minshawi Pasha, and later brought them back to the police headquarters in Tanta. When the chief prosecutor went to interview the suspects upon their return, they complained of having been beaten and tortured. They said that they only confessed to stealing the bull in order to put an end to the torture. The prosecutor ordered the two to be submitted to medical inspection which revealed bruises and abrasions. One of the suspects was given treatment for 15 days and the other for 10 days."

Even then some sort of settlement might have been reached were it not for the fact that the British occupying authorities refused. The British at that time had established a strong presence within the judicial system. Just as their presence would influence the course of the trial that was to ensue, their rejection of a settlement had its own motives.

Within only four days of the preceding article, *Al-Ahram* reports that the general prosecutor, Mr. Corbett, and the Interior Ministry inspector, Mr. Wilson (note the names) had arrived in Tanta and ordered "the arrest of the commissioner, Ali Effendi Galabi and Minshawi Pasha, and ordered the precinct police superintendent to place them under detention which he did."

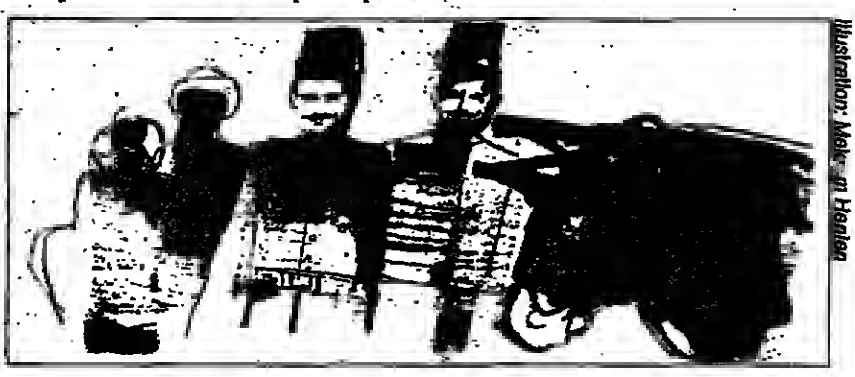
That same day, the Ministry of the Interior ordered that Saadeddin Pasha, the provincial director of Gharbiya be suspended from duty and brought before a disciplinary board. The board was chaired by the minister of justice and comprised the deputy ministers of interior, finance, foreign affairs and public works. It was obvious that the occupation authorities were behind this decision, and from this point forward, the "case of the khedival bull" developed into a major public opinion issue. A man of Minshawi's stature — he was the most prominent notable in Gharbiya — could not be thrown into prison without causing ripples, and "People flocked to Tanta from all quarters of the province in order to be on hand to keep abreast of the latest developments in this grave incident."

More importantly, the issue, escalated into a political crisis, the protagonists of which were the occupation authorities, the khedive, the notables and, expressing the views of these various parties, the press, of which *Al-Ahram*, of course, was an influential member.

The occupation was keen to politicise the incident, so as to assert itself as the defender of justice and the oppressed, thereby

152 The theft of a bull in the Nile Delta became a cause célèbre at the beginning of this century. It created a political polarisation that involved the khedive, British occupation authorities, Egyptian notables and the general public. The focus of the crisis was no ordinary animal; it was the property of the khedive. The key behind-the-scenes players were the British, who posed as defenders of human rights in an effort to entrench their presence in Egypt. The outcome of the drama was the imprisonment of a senior dignitary and the enshrinement of the royal bull in the British High Commissioner's annual report. **Dr Yunan Labib Rizq** tells the story on the basis of reports published in *Al-Ahram*

On another occasion, *Al-Ahram* accuses the occupation newspapers of "seeking to transform this issue into a political cause, a course we have refused with explicit argument and proof." The other newspapers in this country should do likewise and refuse to lend this issue attributes outside the scope of justice and the law."



propounding its justification for remaining in the country on humanitarian grounds. These motives were criticised by *Al-Ahram*, which published a lengthy article in its 3 April edition.

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Meanwhile the khedive, Abbas II, was in a predicament. In his personal capacity, he was one of the largest landowners in Egypt. Not only had he inherited extensive property from his father, but during his 20 years in power he had managed to expand his possessions considerably. He would thus be expected to side with Minshawi Pasha. But the most prominent notable of Al-Gharbiya had behaved a little too zealously in his eagerness to ingratiate himself with the khedive and the khedive would be inclined to disassociate himself from the actions of this notable. At the same time, to side with Minshawi would clearly put the khedive at loggerheads with the occupation authorities over an issue in which they appeared to have the upper hand. In short, he had to be extremely cautious.

In its 1 April edition, *Al-Ahram* reported that the notables of the provincial directorate had decided to form a delegation "that will travel to the capital in order to solicit the sympathies of His Royal Highness the Khedive and the members of his government so as to seek the release of Min-

shawi Pasha pending trial and the promulgation of the ruling of the court." This delegation never came into being, however, which leads one to suspect that the khedive had privately advised them against the move.

Minshawi himself was not idle. He dispatched numerous telegrams to the members of the government and the khedive himself. He protested his innocence of the accusations against him and entreated His Royal Highness to give his attention to his plight. The khedive dispatched one of his adjutants, Zaki Bek, to look into the matter. At the same time, however, he took precautions to convey to the occupation authorities that this action did not imply his sympathy with Minshawi.

If Abbas had any recourse to help Minshawi at all, it was through the national press, and specifically *Al-Ahram*. *Al-Ahram* waged a multi-pronged campaign in defence of the Pasha from Tanta, inspired undoubtedly by its sense that the British were seeking to further consolidate their power through this case. On 3 April, for example, it announced that the prosecution had listened to nine witnesses all of whom had testified that the purported bull thieves were never beaten. Also, it attempted to refute the logic of the accusations against Minshawi, arguing that the man had no interest at stake in the matter that would compel him to commit such an act. Finally, the newspaper protested against the ill treatment that the notable from Gharbiya suffered in prison. He was refused milk, "and if this is true, the prison authority should be severely censured. Minshawi Pa-

sha has been detained, not out of revenge, but for a crime of which he is accused. And even should he prove guilty of these accusations his punishment would be a form of discipline and a lesson. It is no reason why the warden should refuse milk to the accused."

It was the occupation's intention to proceed with the trial of the pasha regardless of the logic of arguments to the contrary. The case was first heard in the Tanta National Court on 22 April. The judges bench consisted of Mohamed Bek Shukry, presiding, and Mohamed Bek Sidqi and Hanna Bek Ibrahim. Minshawi had chosen for his defence two of the most famous lawyers of the time, Ahmed Bek El-Husseini and Karim Effendi Fahim. Ibrahim Bek Al-Hilbawi was the defence lawyer for the police commissioner.

The proceedings opened with the interrogation of the victims — Marzuq Abu Tabbikh, Isawi Salman, Ibrahim Gawahra, Hassan Khalil and Abul-Naga Salam — who reaffirmed the statements they made during the investigation to the effect that they were verbally abused and physically mistreated in the Radiya estate and that Minshawi was physically present during the torture. The first three of the victims had been accused of stealing the bull and the other two of purchasing, slaughtering and eating it. El-Hilbawi attempted to cast aspersions on the victims' testimony and pointed out that one of them had a record of previous offences. However, the victims were able to vouch for their credibility by giving detailed descriptions of their tortures and the location in which they were tortured. A forensic medicine expert testified that it was impossible that the claimants could have inflicted the wounds upon themselves. He said that some of their wounds were inflicted by a thin whipping instrument such as a cane while others were inflicted by a thicker and more solid object such as a mulehoe.

The defence had brought in 20 witnesses to testify on behalf of the accused. Most of these witnesses were local dignitaries such as village mayors and sheikhs. All of them claimed to have been present on the premises at some time that day, that they saw no indications of any torture in progress and that they heard the men confess to the theft of the bull.

The court set 24 April as the date for its ruling. *Al-Ahram's* correspondent writes, "People arrived in droves, filling the streets and squares of Tanta. Additional police reinforcements were brought in and posted at the doors and the windows of the courthouse. The people were growing increasingly impatient to hear the ruling. It was not until five and a half hours after the scheduled time that the judges emerged from the chambers to announce their decision."

The court sentences Minshawi Pasha to three months imprisonment as the principal perpetrator and Ali Effendi Galabi, the precinct commissioner, to two and a half months imprisonment in his capacity as accomplice in the crime. As for the servants

of the Pasha, Surur Ahmed, Zaid Aqab, and Mohammed Riza, they shall each be sentenced to two months imprisonment for having carried out the crime in compliance with the order of their master."

There was an outcry in the Egyptian and French newspapers against the court's ruling. According to *Al-Ahram*, the sentence "passed against a dignified man of such high standing and a commissioner who has been deprived of the source of his livelihood and the fruit of his toils has pained the hearts of the people but will not diminish the reverence they have for Minshawi Pasha."

Against this backdrop, Minshawi Pasha boarded the train to the capital in order to hear the ruling on the appeal he had lodged with the prosecution.

The following day, the Cairo Court of Appeals convened amidst the spectacle described by *Al-Ahram's* correspondent at the beginning of this episode. It escaped no one's notice that the court's treatment of the appellants appeared purposefully degrading: "Minshawi and the commissioner were made to stand in the dock like common criminals, a sight that deeply moved people's sympathies in the courtroom. The court's review of the appeal took three days, after which it announced that it upheld the ruling passed by the court of first instance. It did make an exception, however, of Police Commissioner Galabi, who was acquitted, although ordered to report to the board of corrections in the Interior Ministry. As for Minshawi, there was no other route but to serve his prison sentence. On 27 June, he was released."

While this concluded this episode in the life of Minshawi, its political effects continued to reverberate throughout the following year. Indeed, such was its effect that Lord Cromer singled it out for comment in his yearly report of 1903. After summarising the history of the case, from the British perspective of course, the high commissioner pronounced his judgement that "the verdicts that were passed in this case were extremely just."

Cromer's stance provoked an outcry in the press. Writes *Al-Ahram*, "It is clear from the opinion Lord Cromer expressed that, in spite of his considerable intelligence and capacity to distinguish right from wrong, he has proved incapable in this instance of an objective judgement. For our part, we find it wiser to hold our peace than to take sides on an issue in which the opinion of Lord Cromer and that of the public are on the opposite ends of the pole."

If any parties to this incident gained any distinction at all, it was the khedival bull, which, in spite of its untimely death, entered the annals of history in Lord Cromer's report.

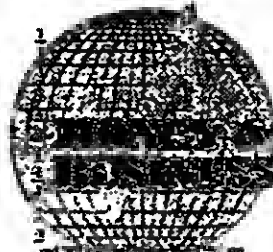
The author is a professor of history and head of *Al-Ahram* History Studies Centre.



Working on fast-paced development

NAWAL El-Tatawi, minister of economy, stated at the Shura Council that investments in the fields of education, social services and housing are considered the primary goals of development. The minister reviewed the role assumed by the Ministry of Economy in upgrading development: "Billions of pounds are being spent on basic services, focusing on means of closing the gap between different brackets of society. We are dedicated to development and therefore are keen to implement large-scale projects such as the Sinai Development Project," El-Tatawi said.

MONEY & BUSINESS



Egypt in petroleum conference

HAMDI El-Banbi, minister of petroleum, travelled to Italy to attend a petroleum conference for European nations organised by the Association of Petroleum Engineers. The meeting, which started Tuesday, ends today. Banbi spoke during the opening session of the conference, in which he discussed challenges currently facing the petroleum industry and proposed ways to approach these challenges in light of the changes taking place worldwide. The conference, which takes place every two years, provides an opportunity for Egypt to make contact with potential investors.

NBE's leading role in youth employment

THE NATIONAL Bank of Egypt (NBE) plays a pivotal role in the creation of new job opportunities for youth via the establishment of new small-scale projects or the expansion and development of outstanding ones. In this vein, the bank, together with the Social Fund for Development, have adopted an ambitious project for the collection, manufacture and distribution of milk in Greater Cairo. The project shall be effected in co-operation with United Producers Company over a period of six years. It is envisaged to provide sterilised milk at reasonable prices for consumers and enhance children's health through the use

of modern and sophisticated methods of collecting and manufacturing milk and dairy products.

The project aims at establishing some 508 individual or joint small-scale projects for distribution of dairy products (of which at least 60 per cent would be new projects and 40 per cent outstanding ones). This provides some 1,000 permanent job opportunities besides 2,000 temporary ones.

Six centres are to be established in selected villages known for their abundant milk production, to provide the project with its needs. The centres will be supplied with laboratories and coolers in

addition to the equipped trucks deemed necessary for transporting milk to the factories.

Moreover, a main centre will be established in Cairo for the distribution of sterilised milk to different outlets. This centre will be equipped with a conference hall for training, a computer system to identify productivity rates in a short time with due measures to rectify them — if necessary. Moreover, this centre will be furnished with modern workshops and a large garage for truck maintenance and shelter.

In addition to creating new job opportunities for young graduates and for experts —

in processing and distributing dairy products — who look forward to developing their activities, the project aims at encouraging women's employment by allocating a share of 30 per cent of the job opportunities thereto.

Furthermore, NBE participated in the 10th Fair for Youth organised by Youth and Sports Broadcasting in

the framework of October celebrations during the period of 12-18 October 1996 in the Investment Hall at the Nasr City Fairgrounds. Some 1,000 graduates exhibited their products and projects and received the applications from the bank. Cases will be studied upon the return of applications and suitable loans will be granted.

Faisal Islamic Bank of Egypt

A computerized draw to select depositors for an all expenses paid Umra - Ragab month took place on 16/10/96 at Faisal Bank's head office. Depositors selected were:

No.	Branch	Acc. No.	No.	Branch	Acc. No.
1	Cairo	54179	9	Cairo	200244
2	Cairo	49845	10	Mahala	3267
3	Heliopolis	47236	11	Cairo	168718
4	Heliopolis	39776	12	Sohag	380
5	Alexandria	19442	13	Benha	7713
6	Alexandria	91950	14	Heliopolis	39344
7	Heliopolis	40325	15	Alexandria	12627
8	Alexandria	36113			

Regulations:

- The winner can grant the prize to relatives of the first or second degree
- In case the winner is minor, his custodian can benefit from the prize
- Winners should come in person to the bank within two weeks.

Next week in *Money and Business*: Trade with China

Presenting the Peugeot 405 Prestige

PEUGEOT Egypt has recently launched its new Prestige 405 model in Egypt. This model has a two litre fuel injected engine with 128 horsepower which distinguishes the Prestige with its high power.

The Peugeot Prestige is designed to cope with tropical weather including undercover protection for rough and dusty roads.

The Prestige is equipped with luxurious features such as:

— Regulated air conditioning



- Power steering
- Electrical side mirrors
- Special front fog lights
- Headlight beam level adjustable from inside
- Tiltable steering wheel

drive, in addition to outside temperature information display. Peugeot Prestige: Luxury without limits... power without barriers!

Americom products in Egypt

IN AN interview with *Money and Business*, Ferid Seddiq, chairman of the Egyptian Technology Company, Americom Egypt, said that state-of-the-art computers produced in the United States of America are now being manufactured in the company's factory in Borg El-Arab City. Some of these products, such as the Praxeas Server, are being sent to governmental bodies and universities and major companies.

Americom has been working seriously to de-

sign the moderately-priced Libra processor, which is most suitable for the Egyptian market. A warranty is provided for all items sold by the company, Seddiq said.

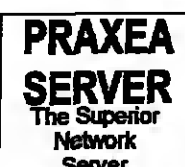
Tarek Helmi, general manager of the Technology Park Co, the sole distributor from Americom, said that his company distributes computer components and accessories throughout Egypt.



State-of-the-art Computers are now very affordable in Egypt ONLY FROM

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AMERICOM (Egypt)



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Marketing Arab travel

Last week the fourth International Arab Travel Market (IATM) opened at the Cairo International Conference Centre with 106 exhibitors from 28 countries. Rehab Saad toured the show, spoke to exhibitors and learned of new and widened vistas

For travel agencies, hotels, tour operators and all those who are involved in the tourist business, the IATM which is held annually in Cairo, is an excellent opportunity to meet their counterparts from other countries, make deals and promote their operations.

"A characteristic of this year's market was the introduction of seminars and workshops where travel agency representatives could meet one another in closed sessions. We encouraged such meetings," said Ahmed Hafez, president of the market.

The IATM this year spanned an area of 6,000 square metres and included 106 booths: 36 travel agencies, 6 airlines, 12 hotel chains, ministries of tourism from 14 different countries, 29 private sector companies and 9 tourist villages. The booths featured a wide range of products — Egyptian, Arab and international.

Participating Arab countries included Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, Yemen and Jordan. Cyprus, the United Kingdom, Zimbabwe, Greece, South Africa and India represented some of the non-Arab countries present.

The achievements of the Egyptian tourism industry were displayed in a 3,000 square metre area under the umbrella of the Ministry of Tourism and the Egyptian Tourist Authority (ETA).

This year, for the first time, the Tourist Development Authority (TDA) participated. "We're promoting tourism projects supervised by the authority. We're giving the visitors an idea of the options we can offer investors," said Adel El-Guindy of the TDA, who added that 80 per cent of their projects were already finished. "We're now promoting the remaining 20 per cent. A number of investors discussed with us the possibility of investing in specific areas. They will later come to our headquarters to finalise deals," he said.

El-Guindy pointed out that the Red Sea area, especially south of Hurgada, is most sought after by investors. "Attention is now being di-

rected toward the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aqaba," he said.

One familiar face at the IATM was Cyprus, which has participated every year since the first market in 1992. "We have established ourselves here," said Cleanthis Neftis, director of tourism in Cyprus, who pointed out that the exchange of tourists between Egypt and Cyprus is flourishing. However, the number of Cypriots travelling to Egypt is considerably higher than the number of Egyptians travelling to Cyprus. "About 110,000 tourists sailed from Cyprus to Egypt on quick boat trips from Limassol to Alexandria and Port Said last year, whereas only 12,000 Egyptians went to Cyprus, even though Cyprus is just one hour's flight from Cairo," he said.

Neftis emphasised that Cyprus is becoming a favourable resort for Arabs. "Last year we had around two million

between the Nuweiba and Aqaba harbours. "Recently, we introduced new luxury vessels which take tourists from Aqaba to Sharm El-Sheikh and then return. We also operate one-day trips from Sharm El-Sheikh to Dahab, Taba, Nuweiba, Aqaba and Petra in Jordan. About one hundred tourists take the trip weekly," Kenji said, explaining that these boats must be specifically chartered for groups.

The largest and most attractive section was from Syria. The booth covered 54 square metres with oriental decor and an impressive display of products for which Syria is famous: traditional dresses, silver accessories, swords and daggers from Damascus, glass inlaid with gold and silver and copper engravings.

"Our booth includes sections by the Syrian Ministry of Tourism, some Syrian hotels, travel and transportation companies as well as the national airline," said Mohamed Rashad Al-Hamad of the Syrian Ministry of Tourism.

"Our participation in international fairs gives us the opportunity to further our contacts with other travel agencies, tour operators and airlines," said Nada Hussein, director of public relations at the Sheraton, Damascus. "It is a big tourism activity which aims at promoting every-

one's interests but, in particular, we are trying to attract Egyptians to Syria. Egyptians usually come to Syria as individuals, rarely in groups. However, Syrians mostly travel to Egypt in groups and we are now offering special prices for Egyptian groups. I have already contacted some of the Syrian tour operators and the Syrian airline to help facilitate the movements," she continued.

Alaeddin Moussa, marketing manager for Syrian Air, said, "We want to facilitate tourism between the two countries and efforts are being made by the Syrian government to encour-

age tourism to play a larger role in the economy. Syria has already abolished the need for people from other Arab nations to obtain visas.

Moussa observed that hotel prices in Syria are considered high by Egyptians, compared with rates in other countries. "Research is being carried out to help reduce our rates," he said, adding that the current price of hotels is due to a shortage of places to stay. "We only have five star hotels. When more hotels are built, the prices will fall," he explained.

Regarding hotels, Koussey Mouna, general manager of Karnak Tours and Transport Company said that most of the Egyptian groups that travelled with his company sought three star hotels. "The five stars are only affordable to a select few," he said adding that he is not expecting to sign any contracts during the market. "An exchange of addresses and business cards between different exhibitors comes first. Agreements take place later by fax," he said.

The IATM was naturally an excellent place for new tourism establishments and projects to advertise and promote their activities. Among these new companies is Alim Airlines, a recently established Egyptian private charter airline company. "We started operation four months ago with three modern aircraft and a capacity of 180 seats. We operate charter flights to Europe, the Russian Commonwealth countries, Africa, Arab countries, the Far East and South America," said Samir Erian, coordinator of the company. He explained that the flow of tourism in the world has enabled the emergence of these types of trips. "Tourism and aviation are two sides of the same coin," he stressed. Alim Airlines has already operated approximately 25 trips to destinations all over the world. Its officials, however, complain that private airlines are still hindered by numerous obstacles. "Egypt is now calling for privatisation, which means giving freedom to private sector companies, but EgyptAir, the national airline, is hindering the growth of private companies," said Erian, pointing out that the ground services at the airport are under the control of EgyptAir and the Egyptian Aviation Service (EAS), a private company in which EgyptAir is a major shareholder. "With our planes there are always delays getting the escalators or the shuttle buses, which hinders our movement and consequently tarnishes our reputation," he commented, adding that the private airlines should be granted the right to handle their own ground services.

Ahmed Mito, a pilot in the company was of the opinion that there should be competition between different airlines. "This would improve services and create a spirit of innovation. In many countries of the world, there are national and private airlines. There is competition between them but healthy competition in the interest of the passenger."

An innovative idea now being studied is to build a tourist village and operate domestic flights in order to offer a full package for the tourist. "He will come in our planes and stay in our village and if he wants to go to another place, he can use our domestic flights. This is a package where tourism and aviation are combined," said Erian.

Tourist information compiled on CD ROM is the latest in technology that was introduced at the IATM for the first time.

"We load information on tourist destinations and facilities on CD ROM," said Dina Mahmoud, marketing executive of Hya International Trading Group. The CD serves as a reference guide where information concerning location, monuments and museums as well as airlines, travel agencies, embassies, hotels, restaurants, bazaars and malls is listed. "The date on the CD includes a map location to facilitate the movement of tourists and enable them to pinpoint destinations," said Dr Hussein El-Azhary, chairman of the company, who said he started with Egypt and intends to cover Africa and the Middle East as well. "Israel claims that it is the only country in the Middle East which has its information on CD. We plan to show otherwise. At the World Travel Market (WTM) we are going to have our booth beside the Egyptian pavilion and in front of the Israeli booth," he said.

Unfortunately, attendance at the IATM was disappointing. "I thought there would be more participants and more media coverage but this was not the case," said Yasser Gamaledin, assistant sales manager of Humphris Cruise.

Walid El-Attar of Helmao hotels attributed it to lack of sufficient publicity before the event. "There should have been more promotion not only in Egypt but also abroad," he said.

Minister of Tourism Mamdouh El-Beltagi had another explanation: "Unfortunately there was an overlap in dates of the IATM and the American Travel Agents (ASTA) congress held at Bangkok," he said.

Ahmed Hafez, president of the IATM, said he intends to form a board with view to drawing the Arab market in line with others like WTM in London and ITB in Germany. "The board will be comprised of prominent travel agencies and tourist experts who can help promote the market world wide," he said.

On the fringe of the market

Tourist information

AMONG the publications on display the "Tourist Guide Egypt" in Arabic and English held pride of place. It contains a wide range of information regarding tourist destinations, facilities and tourist-related organisations. The 340-page colour guide also lists the names and addresses of tourist, banking and other services and organisations of interest to visitors.

Syrian products

BOOTHs displaying Syrian products being sold at reasonable prices attracted a great number of visitors. Ties, shirts, T-shirts, accessories, perfumes, shoes, make-up and the famous Syrian embroideries quickly disappeared.

Entertainment and gifts

TWO gala dinners attended by participants of all the contributing countries were memorable events. The dinners were sponsored by the Ministry of Tourism and the organisers of the market. Souvenirs and gifts were distributed by different exhibitors including T-shirts, earrings and hair brushes.

EGYPT AIR

Telephone numbers of EGYPT AIR offices in governorates:

Abu Simbel Sales Office:	324836-324735
Alexandria Offices: Ramal:	4833357-4837778
Gleze:	5845461-5845434
Airport Office:	4218444-4227888-4202837-4201989
Aswan Office:	3150407/12/3/4
Airport Office:	4983077-4985688
Assiut Office:	3231511-3227711-3240000-3294077
Mansoura Office:	363978-363733
Hurgada Office:	443591/4
Airport Office:	442883-443597
Ismailia Office:	3289377-221958-221951/2-328936
Luxor Office:	384580/1/2/3/4
Airport Office:	384567/8
Luxor Office Karnak:	382340
Marsa Matruh Office:	934398
Menoufia Office (Shebin El Kham):	233302-233523-233522
New Valley Office:	868/941695
Port Said Office:	224129-222870-220921
Port Said Office Karnak:	238833-239970
Sharm El Sheikh Office:	600314-600409
Airport Office:	600408
Taba Office:	068/530010-530011
Direct:	5783620
Tanta Office:	3117504/311780
Zakazik Office:	349829-349830/1



Models of tourist villages attracted much attention

A special event in Sharm El Sheikh Meridien Hotel



Fruit of the Saudi Egyptian Investment



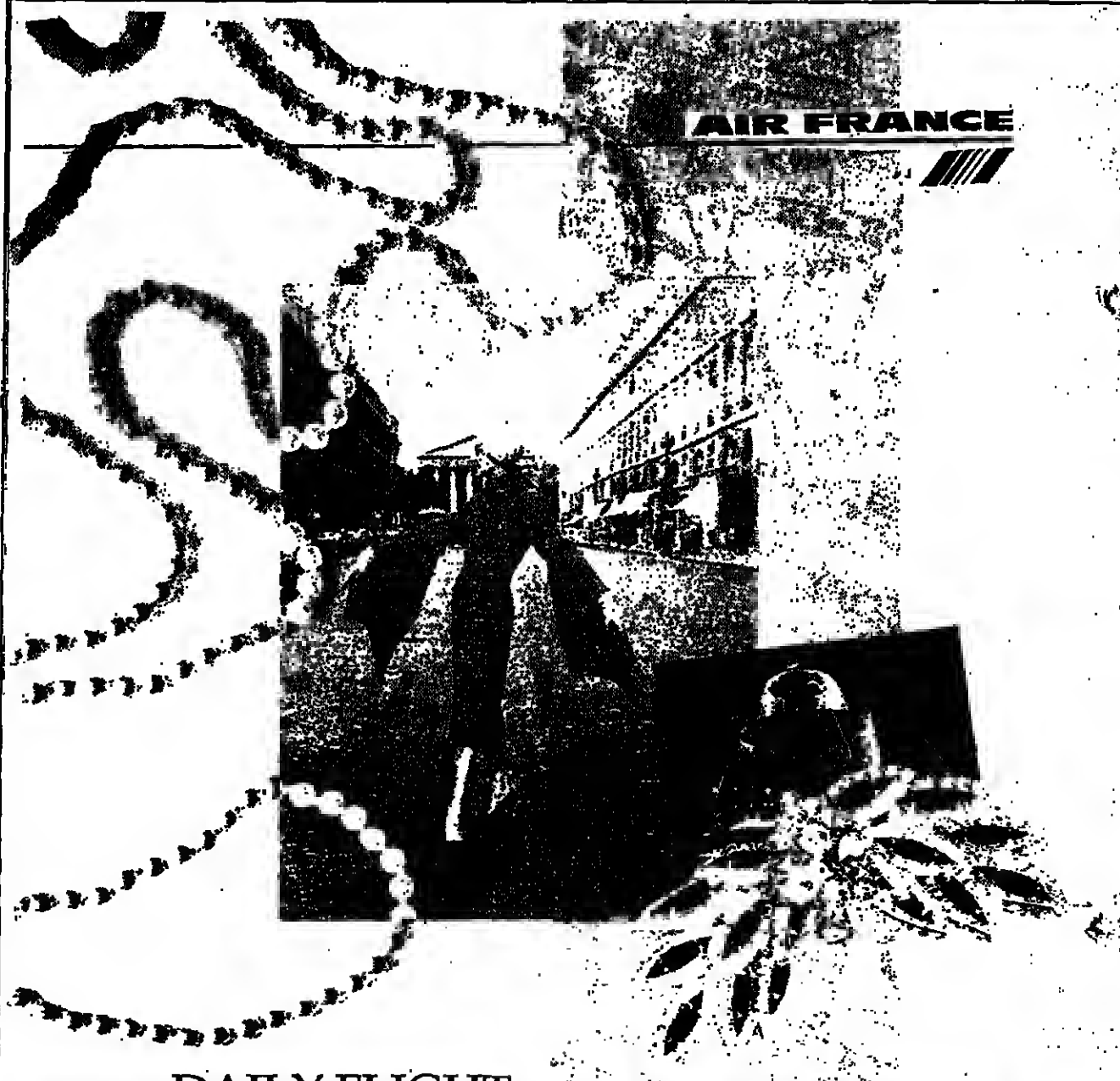
Tuesday Oct. 15 was the day!

Tirana Tourism Investment, owner of the hotel, and Meridien International

Le MERIDIEN
HOTELS & RESORTS

signed a management contract for the Sharm El Sheikh Meridien Hotel.

The Hotel consists of 265 rooms, 20 villas in addition to suites; it is located 5 kilometres from Nema Bay and is overlooking Tiran island. The hotel is scheduled to be opened in 1998 and will be an addition to the area. It will accommodate increasing numbers of tourists in Sharm El Sheikh.



DAILY FLIGHT

PARIS

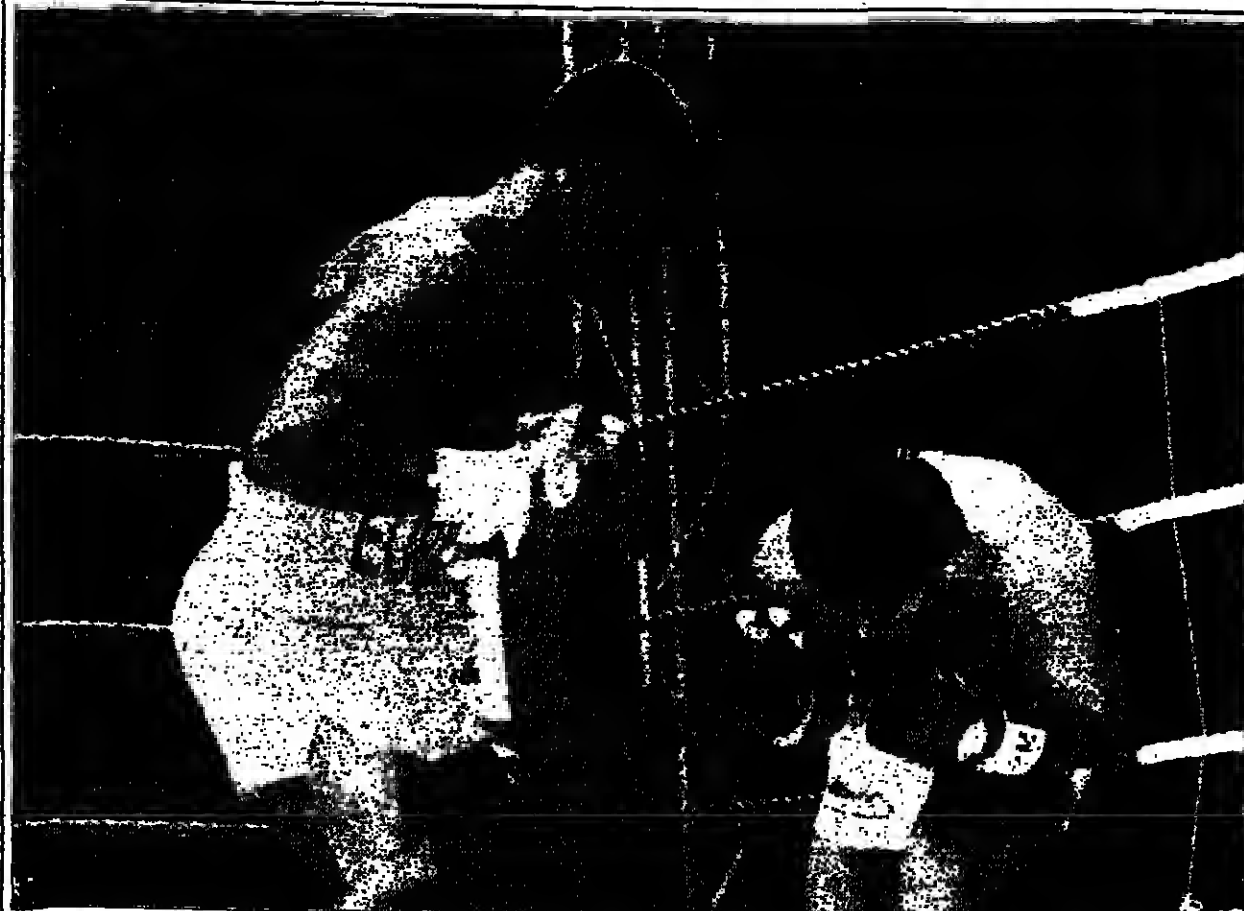
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Eubank's knockout comeback

CHRIS "Simply the Best" Eubank, as expected, made short work of his opponent Luis Dinoisio Barrera of Argentina during his comeback bout at the 25,000-seat indoor hall of Cairo Stadium, reports Abeer Anwar. A confident Eubank toyed with the South American for the benefit of the over-capacity crowd before delivering the knockout punch in the 5th round. "My aim is to entertain the audience and that is why I don't like to finish with the knockout," explained the former champion shortly before the match in which he did just that.

The bout was preceded by six matches, evenly divided between finals for the Egyptian national championships and show matches between champions from Holland, Sweden, Germany and France. The theatrical Eubank entered the ring to the accompaniment of the song "Simply the Best" and a

group of women in Pharaonic costume. "It's the moment I've longed for... to be back in the ring," commented the Briton.

The match, scheduled for 10 rounds, was a triumph of finesse on the side of Eubank during the first four rounds. He fought with typical confidence in front of the many flag-waving British subjects in attendance.

In the next round, Eubank gave Barrera a technical knockout to finish the bout with 13 minutes on the clock. The ease of the defeat places Eubank well on the way to his intended grab for the Light Heavy Weight title.

And so the Eubank caravan rolls on, dressed up as if it were for crusade, with scheduled dates in Jordan, Kuwait, Dubai and Morocco and Disneyland in Paris.



Photo: Hassan Dabb

See you real soon

The Egyptian International Tennis Championships, back from its five-year hiatus, ended Sunday with Brazil's Fernando Meligini emerging with the trophy. Nashwa Abdel-Tawab reports



A strong forehand from Berasategui



Brazil's Fernando Meligini returning a backhand

Under the bright lights of the Gezira Sporting Club's main court, the final matches of the 74th Egyptian International Tennis Championships were concluded as Fernando Meligini defeated Alberto Berasategui to claim the trophy. Thirty-two players were entered in the main singles draw of the ATP recognised Challenger Competition and the presence of Spain's Berasategui, world-ranked 19, and Karim Al-Alami of Morocco, ranked 47 brought added excitement to the competition. "It's a very strong tournament," commented Vincenzo Bonito, ATP tour supervisor. "Since the last direct acceptance was Victor Seand, ranked 287th," Bonito added, in reference to Berasategui, that he had never seen a top 20 player competing in a Challenger event.

To the disappointment of fans, Moroccan Karim Al-Alami was bounced 6-1 3-6 6-2 in his second match. 19-year-old Stephan Koubek from Austria, world-ranked 366, exhibited his potential by defeating Al-Alami, and frustrated all hopes of seeing the Arab champion win the tournament. "He played much better than I did," said Al-Alami. "He played heavily on my back hand and I was too slow in reacting. He also alternated his playing style and threw me off balance."

After his early loss, 23-year-old Al-Alami decided to take a two-week vacation among family in Casablanca, Morocco, promising to return for next year's tournament. The Arab champion came to Egypt shortly after winning the Palermo Championship in Italy.

Berasategui, the favourite to win the tournament, cruised through the competition defeating Gerard Solves 6-4 6-4, Branslov Galik 6-3 6-4 and Pietro Angelini 6-0 6-1. In the semi-final he met the eager 19-year-old Romanian player, Razvan Sabau, besting him 7-5 6-1. Victorious, he went on to the final against Brazil's Fernando Meligini.

The entertaining 25-year-old Meligini came close to completing all his matches in three sets, all the while amusing the spectators. His ability to relieve tense moments with humorous antics endeared him to the fans. After defeating Davide Scla 2-6 6-2 6-4, he went on to best Vincenzo Santopadre 6-4 2-6 6-2. The Brazilian got off to a shaky start despite his easy wins and his game only smoothed out in the quarter-finals. Marco Meneschimcheri retired injured after he was beaten by Meligini

1-6 and 1-0. In the semi-finals, Meligini met Frederic Fontang of France winning 6-3 6-4.

In the final match, witnessed by a larger crowd than previously despite it being a working day, Berasategui won the first set 6-3 but lost the second set 1-6. In the third and final set as a result of Berasategui's double faults and out-shots, Meligini snatched the match 6-3 to become the Egyptian International Championships title holder. Amidst the mad cheers of fans Meligini took the cup and a smiling Berasategui the trophy. "We are friends after all," said Berasategui with tears in his eyes and a smile on his face. The first thing Meligini did after besting Berasategui was kiss his father and present him with the cup. "My father came with me for the first time to see what a tournament is like and all the glamour that attracts me," said Meligini who won as the saying goes, "due to his parents praying".

EGYPTIAN ELECTRICITY AUTHORITY ABBASSIA, NASR CITY, CAIRO, EGYPT TELEX 92097 POWER UN. FAX. 2616512 REHABILITATION OF HELIOPOLIS AND WADI HOF SUBSTATIONS 220/66/11-6.6 KV ADJUDICATION NO. 197

FOR THE REHABILITATION OF HELIOPOLIS SUBSTATION

The Egyptian Electricity Authority (EEA) has requested a loan from the (KFW) for financing the foreign currency payments under the contract for which this invitation to tender is issued.

EEA invites tenderers from eligible German firms for the design, manufacture, supply, transport, civil works, project management, erection, testing, setting to work and commissioning in accordance with tender documents and on turn key job bases for the REHABILITATION OF HELIOPOLIS SUBSTATION 220/66/11 KV.

Tendering is limited to tenderers from the German market. The tender documents are available at EEA cashier against presentation of payment receipt of a non-refundable (2000) U.S.dollars for each package from National Bank of Egypt (NBE) main branch EEA's Account No. 280/90/14 together with an application (Original plus two copies) showing the name, address, telex and telephone no. of both supplier and local agent and addressed to the General Director of Central Purchases Department during official working hours.

Tenders (Technical + Prequalification & Commercial) to be submitted according to tender conditions in two sealed envelopes:

- Envelope (A) contains the tenderer's technical proposal including all information as specified in the tender documents for the following packages:
- PACKAGE (A) 220 KV INDOOR (GIS) AND CIVIL WORKS.
- PACKAGE (B) 66 KV INDOOR (GIS)
- PACKAGE (C) DELIVERY OF ONE POWER TRANSFORMER 125 MVA, 220/66/11 KV.

Envelope (B) contains the price proposal and the bid bond which will be returned to unsuccessful tenderers amounting to 2% of the total tender value in freely convertible currency.

Interested tenderers should submit both envelopes (A) and (B) on or before the day of 15/2/1997 at 12:00 (noon) to EEA Central Purchases Department (See address below).

The technical and commercial envelopes will be opened on the same date at 12:00 hours noon.

Tenders will be valid for 150 days after offer opening date.

Tenderer should be the manufacturer of the GIS equipment and transformer or trading company forming a consortium with manufacturer of main equipment.

Interested tenderers may obtain further information regarding tender documents from:

**Egyptian Electricity Authority
Central Purchases Department,
Abbassia, Nasr City, Cairo.
Telex 92097 Power UN Fax:2616512**

First time around

Native son Mahmoud El-Sawah did Egypt proud during the 1st annual Sinai Rally for Wheelchairs. Abeer Anwar profiles the athletes rise to prominence

Mahmoud El-Sawah is known for his cheerful demeanor. His pals — and he has many — always refer to his smiling face and his lack of ill-humour when speaking of him. El-Sawah's jovial nature has seen him through many frustrating circumstances in his 25 years.

El-Sawah recently competed in the 1st Sinai Rally for Wheelchairs.

Coming in second after veteran rally champion George Froind. In his first rally competition, in which he totaled 84km aggregate, the athlete's performance was curtailed by his coaches who were concerned he might over-tax himself. It was a rare moment, one in which El-Sawah allowed his disappointment to surface.

El-Sawah has always been physically active. He spent many long hours training in body building and boxing at a youth centre near his home in his teen years. But one life altering day he was riding the tram and in a freak accident he lost his balance and was severely injured, losing both legs. He was seventeen.

El-Sawah, drawing on his immense reserves of will, insisted on continuing his life as normal. As part of the healing process he returned to El-Wadi Wadi El-Amal Youth Centre where he discovered a programme of activities for the disabled. From that time, El-Sawah resumed his sports and he took part in the '93 Francophone Games in France in the wheelchair events taking seventh place. Two years later he was a member

of the Egyptian delegation at the 1995 Arab Basketball Disabled Championship in Lebanon. It was at this championship that he became acquainted with the young woman accompanying the Egyptian delegation who was to become his bride.

During the Sinai Rally for Wheelchairs, El-Sawah raced with all he had — to win. But that didn't stop him from cheering his friends, encouraging them not to lose faith in their abilities.

El-Sawah, like many Egyptian rally competitors, constructed his own wheelchair. "I acquired some catalogues, bought the wheelchair parts and put them together to make my own," explained El-Sawah. The athlete also revealed his astounding and simple training schedule. He rides his wheelchair to his work every day — a mere 10 kilometres away from his home. To top it all off he tries to shave minutes off each of the previous day's time to increase his stamina. "It is the simplest way of training. Instead of riding a taxi to work or the sports centre I wheel myself there. El-Sawah's shoulders and arms are well muscled due to his weightlifting training. And, as he says, that is all he needs. "In order to be able to win wheelchair races, I have to have very strong arms because I mainly depend on my arms to move the chair," said El-Sawah.

When Amm Abdu left his home in Aswan over a half century ago, little did he know that he would become Egypt's most famous ambulance driver. For most of those 50 years, Amm Abdu managed to juggle a career, raise seven children and volunteer untold hours to the service of the injured. Amm Abdu moved to Cairo to pursue his studies, and as is often the case, found himself doing much more than he had intended.

"The manager of the insurance company where I was employed asked for volunteers for ambulance duty during off hours. I jumped at the opportunity to help people in distress. In the name of God," said Amm Abdu. "It became a hobby by even though at times the pressure was intense. I volunteered from 9.00pm till 7.00am and then off I went to work until 2.00pm," he added.

During the 1973 War, Amm Abdu enlisted as a volunteer for ambulance duty to ferry the wounded. "It was a must for me. I couldn't remain idle while my country was at war. I drove the injured soldiers to different hospitals around Egypt."

As Amm Abdu approached retirement age, his manager suggested he volunteer as an ambulance driver at football games. It was the beginning of a beautiful partnership.

"I've seen it all, every kind of physical injury. I hate to see the players hurt of course, but I

love my work and I feel like a father to all the players," he said.

Not surprising to anyone who has attended a match at Cairo Stadium, the majority of the passengers in Amm Abdu's ambulance are mostly over excited match spectators.

"Three quarters of the injuries are from audience members. The mood of football matches leans toward excitement and sometimes results in heart attacks and a great many other emergencies. Once during a Zamalek match, a man got so excited he threw himself onto the field and severely injured himself. We got him out and took him to hospital but a few days later he died. That is one incident I will never forget," he said.

In 1990, the Egyptian Football Federation treated Amm Abdu and a colleague to a trip to Italy with the football team in recognition of his selfless services.

"God never forgets anyone. That's why during my free time I like to relax and listen to the Qur'an. The Qur'an touches me, calms me and I believe gives me the strength to help others," commented Amm Abdu.

Amm Abdu has nothing but fond memories of his life but feels the time has come to let another take up his duties. "I ask two things from God. For the president to decorate me so I can retire for good and to perform the Hajj with my wife," he added.

Edited by Inas Mazhar

Abdel-Hadi El-Weshahi: Diogenes in darkness

Adventures in space: up, up and away

El-Weshahi is a puzzling man. "A heart of gold," say his friends. But for someone so kind, he is hardly gregarious. He rarely leaves the house. He knows none of his neighbours, although he has lived in the same flat for over ten years. When he does go out, it is only to scuttle back home as soon as possible, "and take antibiotics, to restore my sense of humanity. We're going back to the jungle. Look at how people treat each other!" His very eyebrows bristle in indignation. He is emphatic in his opinions. "I don't make statues" - he says it with a moue of distaste - "I make sculptures."

He is a moralist, but this is a trait he refuses to acknowledge. When he is pressed for a description of the chosen few who do possess humanity, however, it all comes tumbling out. "Someone who has respect for himself and for others, who does not invade their space, physically or morally. Someone endowed with nobility. Look at us: we push and shove to be first in line or keep the best part of the miserable footpath. We practically throw ourselves in front of passing cars - which fail to stop for pedestrians anyway - all in order to catch one of those awful death traps you insist on calling buses and which are polluting the city. Is this life?"

Unlike may, El-Weshahi does not blame the system. "Our citizens lack a vision of what they ought to be," he says with a note of disgust. "When I was ten years old, in Mansoura, I remember pulling myself up very straight so I could feel taller, and telling myself 'I want to be a human being.' I have never forgotten that instant." Ever since, El-Weshahi has practiced grandeur and nobility. It is not a matter of financial ease. He doesn't care about worldly comforts as long as his personal integrity is respected. And he keeps looking for human beings who will reconcile him with society.

He doesn't want to go out but he is irresistibly drawn to the city and its people. He tries to touch - or at least to teach. Taxi drivers are favourite subjects. One evening we are downtown. El-Weshahi is grimacing at the noise, the crowd, even the fragments of conversations which he accidentally overhears as our path crosses that of other urban guerrillas. "Let us go somewhere, I can't stand this," he says suddenly. He hails a taxi and gives the driver an address. "It will cost you ten pounds," says the taxi driver. El-Weshahi freezes. He has been insulted. His eyes narrow into slits, his mustache, not unlike a dog's whiskers, quivers. "Well?" asks the driver, who is observing us in the mirror. Not another word is exchanged, but the driver is suddenly terribly unsettled. "Don't look at me like that," he pleads. "Some clients refuse to pay. I swear I did not want to offend you." The driver is speeding madly in his confusion. "You have offended me mortally," El-Weshahi retorts in icy tones. "Stop at once, I do not want to be in your company a minute longer." The driver stops. We get out and El-Weshahi disdainfully hands the driver a few bills. The driver is beside himself. He hands back most of the money. "I am an honest man, I don't rob my clients, you have to understand, I have a hard job..." Finally the transaction is

completed, the driver still flustered. El-Weshahi still serene. "Do I look like someone who would take off without paying you?" he asks sternly. "You are on the road every day, twelve hours a day. Haven't you learned to understand who your passengers are?" He is quite satisfied with the man's response. "See?" he says. "There is some good in everyone."

El-Weshahi is an artist, but not just any kind of artist. He is a sculptor involved with an art which should inspire reverence. Is his medium the most powerful of the plastic art? He sidesteps the question and launches into an elaborate explanation of the Zodiac. He is a Scorpio, those born under this sign have grandeur, they strive to achieve, they can be many things but they are never petty. Pride, self-assurance even majesty are among their traits, and they have a vision. Look at de Gaulle and Picasso. Look at how many leaders are

Scorpios. But grandeur has its drawbacks. El-Weshahi's career as a university professor has failed to reflect his talent, simply because he refuses to let his work be evaluated by those who could hoist him up into the heights of academic achievement. "Who is to judge what I do? How dare they put a label on a creation? My work is neither good or bad, it just is." It is with this in mind that he has refused to go through the bureaucratic steps of a university career. He teaches at the College of Fine Arts, but considers himself a friend to his students, not a professor who has been rubber-stamped acceptable.

El-Weshahi takes things personally - things that others would comment on, and forget with a sigh. He deplores the fact that central squares are not adorned with beautiful sculptures, as they are in Europe. "You know? Maybe we have lost our way because we have nothing beautiful in our streets to please our eyes. When you see beauty every day, even if you barely glance at it, it works on you unconsciously. You learn about proportions and harmony without knowing. It works like a symphony which you have heard many times without really paying attention. Suddenly you recognise the melody when you hear it and discover that you can hum a few measures. The door has been opened. You may go in, or decide to leave it at that, but somehow you are now a little richer."

Sculpture, he says is different from all the other arts. His passion is for the form - his hands describe a curve, flatter for a moment above the table. His works are hardly coffee-table adornments. Some sweeping over five metres tall, they could only stand in a park or on museum grounds. Vast

structures stand poised on tiptoe, almost unleashed about to take flight.

He loves music and the theatre. For years, working in his atelier, he has listened to the radio, working along to plays, the opera and symphonies galore. Here in Egypt he doesn't go much to the theatre or concerts, but when he was living in Spain and Italy he had a real feast, almost indigestion, which will last him a life time. He was overwhelmed by the beauty and the richness of the sights his eyes encountered. He never wanted to come back. "I was a real human being there. What I had wanted to be all along. I felt the dignity of being."

But his father worried about this rebellious son and, after seven years, wrote to him that he was dying. A rebel, maybe; but El-Weshahi could not be an ungrateful son. He came back. "My father died twenty years later," he says with a wry smile. He has forgiven the ruse.

Of his professional life in Spain, he doesn't want to say much. "You should know by now that I don't boast," he tells us with a mischievous smile. "I would rather tell you the story of Acetuna, my Spanish cat, who was as black as olives." Having acquired the cat while in Spain, he was obliged to leave her behind when he went off for a three-month sojourn in Italy. In desperation, on the day of his departure, he abandoned her in the lobby of the apartment building, hoping that someone would take her in. On his return, three months later, he heard a joyous mew when he opened his kitchen window. He looked, and there was Acetuna waiting for him - on his own balcony. The cat had settled on this very spot the day he had left. No amount of coaxing had made her move from where she could observe his window.

The neighbours hearing her pitiful cries, took to sending her food and water in little baskets that they lowered from their own windows. "This is what I call being human," he concludes with satisfaction. "My cat was faithful and the neighbours compassionate." One feels, somehow, that he expected nothing less.

El-Weshahi is demanding of himself and of others. Refusal to compromise has become a cliché, but while he pays no lip service to the principle, he does refuse to say things just because people want to hear them, or to bow to hierarchies to get a foot in the door. He must be an equally exacting parent. His son is 16 and the relationship is rather distant, but he admires his son. He refuses to smother him. "We respect each other. He will do what he wants to do. Nobody could stop me, why should I be so presumptuous as to tell my son what he wants to do? Remember Gihraan, and what he said about how to bring up your children?" El-Weshahi grins and leans forward, his eyes narrowing into slits, his mustache punctuating his recitation of the lines that advice parents to be like a bow - the truer the aim, the further the arrow will go. "I never forget Gihraan when I am with my son... or with any other youngster." He hasn't enough words of contempt for the way children are brought up. "Obey your father, obey your mother, listen to your teachers, do not discuss orders. Obey, obey, obey..." he mimics imaginary parents' voices. He is angry now. "When is the child to be himself?"

This is why, a few years ago, he attempted to create an art school at the Mukhtar Museum during the school holidays. "I wanted the children to do what they wanted without constant supervision, advice and warnings about their clothes. All these children are awfully gifted, you know. And it doesn't take much to fire their imagination." Is he thinking of the little boy in Mansoura, who started out with bits of chalk for clay and a nail for a chisel? Of the joy that overcame him when he found a small knife which allowed him to improve his technique? "That day I decided to be a sculptor."

Although he makes it sound easy, his father, a government official, was not overjoyed by this decision. Nor was he happy with his son's strange ways. "Everyone in our neighbourhood went to Ras El-Bar for the summer holidays and fathers taught their sons to swim," El-Weshahi, however, sat sublimely on the shore, sculpting in the sand. At an age when most children had given up on sand castles, he perfected his technique. Finally, like many artists born in the countryside, he had to run away to Cairo, where he enrolled in the school of Fine Arts. The rest is history.

Of his mother he has no memory, she died when he was four years old. The yearning for her affections turned into a deep understanding of women. "When they are real women, that is," he says a bit wistfully. He compares women to the sky and the earth: protecting, nurturing, like the mother that he missed. "I know why there have never been any

well-known women composers - a female Bach, or a Beethoven," he says suddenly, to detract attention from too personal a subject. He seems to have given it a lot of serious thought, but his manner is jocular for an instant. "Don't give me the story about women being underprivileged and stifled, please." Music is one of the great loves of his life and one feels that he personally resents the fact that, in a domain where they had never been hindered - most bourgeois houses were adorned with a piano and little girls were firmly urged to use it - women had never shown great talent.

El-Weshahi is inspired now, having linked music with his first passion, the eternal feminine of the earth, the mountains, the sky. "Music is the epitome of abstract thought. Women have no time for abstractions. They leave to men the task of dealing with the great problems of the world. They have a more urgent duty: their job is to bring up men and women. They have no use for theoretical endeavours they were made to deal with what is essential, down-to-earth realities."

El-Weshahi loves allegories, riddles, puzzles and non sequiturs that lead right back to the point. One of his sculptures is of a man, a woman and their son - "although you probably wouldn't think so if you saw it. You might see something entirely different." He had forgotten all about this piece. Then one day, it had come back to him when he read an item in the paper about a couple, very much in love, who had lived a long time together in total bliss. For many years, however, try as they might, they could not conceive. Then it so happened that they were blessed with twins. As soon as the children were born, the wife lost interest in her husband. She couldn't wait to see him out of the house. The husband, anguished at his sudden redundancy, was writing to the paper for advice.

"You see?" says El-Weshahi, "his role was over." And how does he see his own role? Not as a husband or a family man. In any case, he needs his space to allow his projects to come to fruition. He is heir to the people who built the pyramids, those temples to form, celebrations far more powerful than mere statues. They left something to posterity, something that spelled the greatness of humanity. Small successes have no value. The fact that El-Weshahi received full marks - a practically unheard-of achievement for his doctoral project - does not mean anything, he tells us with contempt. What he creates does. Like his martyr of Dinsihawi, tense like a bow and reaching to the sky. "I want my work to be a testimony to the dignity of man."

Profile by Fayza Hassan

Pack of cards by Madame Sosostri

Can you imagine dear, I was all set to attend the most enlightening of workshops, sponsored by the Med Media Network and Al-Ahram Weekly: English Language Feature Writers' Masterclass, it is called. I took the best samples of what I consider my little masterpieces to show Tudor Lomas, director

of Med Media and Trevor Royle, associate and features editor of *Scotland on Sunday*, and the man conducting the workshop on the evening I attended the lavish reception at the Nile Hilton to launch the seminar. And would you believe, these two gentlemen told me there and then, that news about my very good

friends did not qualify as features. Fancy that! It quite spoilt the lovely dinner I was having more of. And, not only that... the next day, they opened the seminar right in front of my very own eyes at the Weekly's central desk! With five of our own writers and another six from all over the Middle East. Not so long ago I was quite taken by Royle's fascinating book about Gluh Pasha. A very good book, I used to call it. I told Alan Ezz, Al-Ahram's regional Press Institute coordinator and board member, that I had a good mind to read it again and find fault with it.



Tahia Halim by Hamed Abdalla

Not everybody is so choosy, and at the lovely garden party given by Ambassador of China and Mrs Yang Fu Chang to celebrate their National Day, I was among the most esteemed guests and had a chance to congratulate Laila Takla who just came back from Hong Kong where she has been nominated president of the International Federation of Women Lawyers at their Global Biannual Conference. Always collecting these important titles my friend Laila, I also spotted Dr Youssef Wali, deputy prime minister, Minister Maher Abaza and Minister Mahmoud El-Sherif admiring the stain glass window,

one of the striking features of the ambassador's residence.

Isn't autumn a good time for a Mediterranean holiday? Apparently not, according to George Bahgory, who phoned to invite me to the vernissage of the exhibition *Visage de la Peinture Egyptienne de l'Antiquité à l'Époque Moderne* featuring 50 paintings by Hamed Abdalla, George Bahgory and Omar El-Nagdi and organised as an homage to the late Hamed Abdalla, in the city port of Le Havre of all places. Such a sad place at this time of year! you know me, I bought a red umbrella and this very Friday I will be singing in the rain, Avenue Foch, Le Havre.

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